DC RAISES PRICES

NMP

TITANS LEGION GO BI-WEEKLY

ALL NEW SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE

COMICS FEATURE

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CANADA

JIM STARLIN
INTERVIEWED

45 YEARS IN COMICS
A TALK WITH
JOE KUBERT

THE ANIMATED ANTICS OF
CASPER

INSIDE THE
KUBERT
ART
SCHOOL

MARVEL MAKES THE MAGIC!

NMP

COMICS FEATURE

SPECIAL SUMMER ISSUE

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By Jim Starlin
Cover characters
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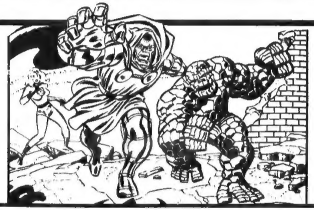

FEATURES

Jim Starlin

His work on Marvel's Warlock and Captain Marvel established him as a creative force in comics. His Dreadstar series for Marvel's Epic Comic line shows that this force has not diminished. In this interview Starlin speaks out on a variety of subjects; the theme behind Dreadstar, the comics industry and people working in it, the fan press and more.

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Joe Kubert

He's been in Comics for over 45 years. He's worked on Sgt. Rock, Tarzan, and Hawkman-and that only scratches the surface of his career. In this interview, Kubert talks about his work [beginning at the age of 11] in comics, the industry itself, the goals of the Joe Kubert School, and much more.

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publisher

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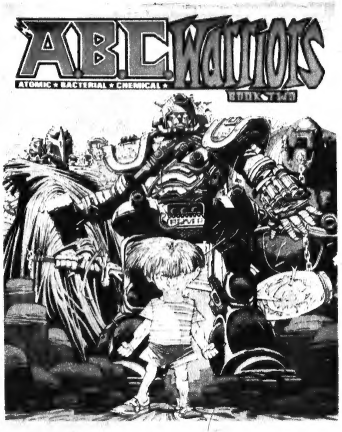
TITAN BOOKS



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Shipping June 1983

THE A.B.C. WARRIORS BOOK TWO
by Pat Mills, Mike McMahon and Carlos Ezquerra

***WAR IS HELL** if you're a robot fighting a humans' war . . .*
***WAR IS HELL** if you're leading a battle-torn band of nuts and bolts . . .*
***WAR IS HELL** if you're . . . the A.B.C. WARRIORS!*

Seven Robot warriors . . . Hammer-Stein – their leader, the first ever robot soldier; Deadlock – the mystic, a master of the Supernatural; Blackblood – merciless killer and potential traitor; Mongrol – robo-paratrooper, now rebuilt as a . . . monstrosity; Joe Pineapples – top A.B.C. sniper; Happy Shrapnel – brawler, looter and top class fighter; and Steelhorn, once a magnificent warrior, now hideously reshaped into the nightmare known as The Mess. Their mission: to liberate Mars from the evil corporations that devastate it.

This is the second and final volume of the *A.B.C. Warriors*, concluding the most demanded and longest awaited story ever to appear in Britain's top science fiction comic, *2000 A.D.* It is written by Pat Mills, creator of *2000 A.D.*

- Three new story pages created especially for this book by writer Pat Mills and artist Kevin O'Neill
- New full colour cover and frontispiece by Mike McMahon
- Simultaneous hardcover and softcover release

Published by Titan Books Ltd., 58 St. Giles High St., London WC2H 8LH. England

June 1983

FEATURE NEWS

DC COMICS GO TO 75
Change Paper Stock

Beginning with the issues which ship in August and bear a December cover date, all DC comics which previously sold for 60 cents will now sell for 75 cents and will be printed on a Mando paper stock. This change is the largest price increase in the history of comics. The increase of 15 cents per book, is in fact 50% larger than the former record-holder for inflationary changes in the selling price of comic books.

The period between the last increase and this increase in cover prices has been greater than that which elapsed between prior increases and that, in part, may account for the sheer magnitude of the increase. The change in paper stock, it is hoped by DC, will help to sweeten the blow to consumer pocket-books as the stories printed will then appear considerably clearer than they have previously. There are no plans for increasing the number of story pages, however. This price structure will compare unfavorable with the Marvel direct only titles which also sell for 75 cents but features a considerably greater number of story pages. All Marvel 60 cents comics will remain at 60 cents for the forseeable future, according to Marvel spokesmen.

Earlier this year, DC Comics had experimented in Dallas and Kansas City with a possible 35 cent price tag on their books with the hope that the greater sales would justify the lower price. Apparently this was not a successful experiment.

TEEN TITANS AND LEGION OF SUPERHEROES GO BI-WEEKLY

Next year both the Teen Titans and the Legion of Superheroes will be featured in biweekly comics. Actually they will each support two titles which will appear in alternate weeks. What differentiates these new books from the current biweekly status of such characters as Spiderman, Superman and Batman is that the two books will be presented in different formats and designed primarily for different markets.

The concept is much along the lines of the book industry's "Hardcover/softcover" concept in which a softcover, cheaper higher-circulation edition is released after the publication of the more limited hardcover release. The long term plan is for each story to make an appearance in a Baxter-format title for sale only to the direct market and then to appear one year later in a newsprint format for release to both the direct market and the general market through Warner Publisher Services.

Possible complications arise during the first year though since no backlog of material exists. Two methods are planned for new releases. The Legion book is tentatively slated for reprint material with possible framing sequences of new material while the Titans book will definitely feature new material. Both Baxter books planned for direct market distribution will contain new story material and no reprints. Both scenarios create serious problems.

The Legion book may suffer from lower sales due to the fact that readers may already have the material being reprinted and the traditional lower sales of reprint titles. The **Adventure Comics Digest** was predicated on the reprinting of Legion stories and has recently been cancelled. When questioned about this aspect of the program, DC Sales Manager and Press Liason Mike Flynn responded that he had no comment.

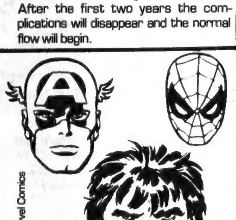
The Titans book creates still more

complicated problems than that caused by the Legion title. The plan there is to produce two all-new books each month and release them two weeks apart. The difficulty with this is that a substancial part of the readership of one of the books, perhaps the largest portion, will not be among the readership of the other book. Therefore anything done in the direct market title will have to be carefully guaged against its effect on the general circulation title since the readership of that title will not necessarily understand the events that take place. If anything significant transpires it will have to occur in both books at once without seeming redundant to the readers that buy both books or the direct market only title will be forced to "Tread water" so that no disruption is caused in the other title. Even more complications will be caused the following year when the stories which appeared in the twelve limited edition issues are then reprinted in the general circulation title. Any events transpiring in the limited series must be able to fit into the storyline of the newsstand title both at the time of initial printing and one year later after a full year of general circulation title has appeared and the stories begin to reappear. After the first two years the complications will disappear and the normal flow will begin.

NEW LINE OF COMICS FROM MARVEL

After an unfruitful attempt to acquire the properties previously published by Harvey comics, Marvel has appointed Tom DeFalco to edit a new line of comics for the company. The new line will be aimed at a younger, "entry-level" readership. As many Marvel spokesmen have said in the past, there is a severe need in the marketplace for additional titles which will introduce the young reader to comic books thus leading to reading of more sophisticated books aimed at the older reader. If the readership becomes closed at one end ultimately there is a risk of the practice of reading comics gradually declining and then ending. This is designed to end that risk.

Tom DeFalco told **Comic Feature** a number of projects are being considered but that it is too early to announce any serious plans. Everything said at this point is still speculation and does not have a solid founding in reality. Possibilities do include funny animal



© 1983 Marvel Comics

stories, stories about very young superheroes, slice-of-life type adventures of young children and other such material. DeFalco has promised an interview to this publication which will appear next issue covering the specific details of the new line.

Danny Fingeroth has assumed editorship of the titles which DeFalco has dropped as a result of his new activity and is now the Spiderman editor at the helm of such titles as **Marvel Team-Up, Spiderman, Peter Parker, and Marvel Tales.** DeFalco, of course, continues to write various special series for the company.

SAD SACK ARTIST WINS SUIT AGAINST HARVEY COMICS

Fred Rhoads has successfully sued Harvey Comics. The 23-year veteran of **Sad Sack** sued Harey when he applied for unemployment and the firm informed him that he had not been an employee but a freelancer. Since his work had been reprinted both domestically and overseas and he did not have a contract abrogating reprint rights, as a freelancer he was entitled to payments for reprinting of his work, payments he had not received. He then proceeded to sue Harvey for those payments and was awarded the sum of $2.5B million. Ironically, if Harvey had honored his unemployment claim and acknowledged his status as a former employee then Rhoads would have been bound under the work-for-hire principle and unable to sue. Harvey is appealing the verdict.

CHANGES AT RED CIRCLE

Changes are in progress at Red Circle. As a result of the constant delaysin meeting deadlines and poor reaction to the writing of the already releasedc titles, Red Circle has revamped its editorial line-up. Rich Buckler has been demoted and will only serve as editor o the **Mighty Crusaders** title, while Bi Dubay has been brought in to edit **The Comet** and **The Black Hood** and Robin Snyder has been promoted to editor of the remaining titles in the line A serious effort will be made to bring in creative talent who can meet deadlines and who can tell a good story.

May 4, 1983

Hal Schuster
New Media Publishing
1518 East Fowler
Tampa, Fl. 33612

Dear Mr. Schuster,

I am writing this to inform you of an error in your "fan"/news magazines. Both in Comics Feature and Comics News in the People in the News section (#23/24 & #2 respectively) someone incorrectly reported that Margaret Clark has replaced Lea Sapp as Jim Shooter's Administrative Assistant. While Lea was Jim's Assistant, I was Lea Sapp's Assistant. When Lea Sapp was promoted Jim requested that I become his new Administrative Assistant.

Who am I? I am Lynn Cohen. And Margaret? Margaret Clark is my Assistant, with the title Editorial Assistant.

To verify this, please check any July cover dated books Bullpen Bulletin. And, please, correct this error.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lynn E. Cohen
Assistant to the
Editor in Chief

To Lynn Cohen:

Please accept our apology for the incorrect news item reported in our magazines.

We hate to make mistakes, especially when they deal with a persons' accomplishments.

Accept our belated congratulations on your promotion.

Again we apologize for the mistake, and appreciate you correcting us on this matter.

Sincerely,
Robert Lewis

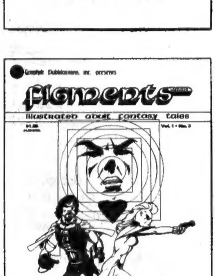
NEW COMICS SCHEDULED

PACIFIC COMICS

Bold Adventure is the latest title to be announced by Pacific Comics. The book will feature adventure themes beginning with Time Force, a science fiction adventure by Bill Dubay and Rudy Nebres, Spitfire, a World War II air-combat series by Dubay and John Severin, and a third series by Dubay and Trevor Von Eeden. Also announced is the one-shot **Joe Kubert School Presents First Folio** produced by the students of Joe Kubert's art school. With these additions Pacific is now publishing more titles than any other direct market publisher although none of their titles has been able to maintain a regular publishing schedule and both distributors and retailers have reported weak to poor sales response on the titles. Pacifice Comics has also announced the publication of **Sunrunners** by Roger McKenzie and Pat Broderick.

GRAPHIK PUBLIKATIONS

Graphik Publikations has announced the creation of a second title, **Arcane,** to begin release in July. The company also publishes **Figments Unlimited.** Also planned are new titles featuring Mantiger and Probe.



CAPITAL COMICS

Capital Comics **Whisper** and **Badge** are scheduled for release in early July. Nexus will continue on a bi-monthly schedule under the same creative team except that Les Dorscheid will assume the coloring chores in lieu of George Freeman. With the second issue of **Badger**, Jeff Butler will begin to do only inks while Rich Burchett will begin to handle the layouts. In less encouraging news, the cover price of the line will go from $1.50 to $1.75 with the change attributed to"...the high cost associated with turning out a product which has production values superior to most comics currently on the market," according to Milton Griep.

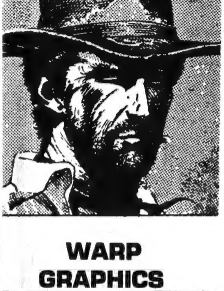
QUEST PUBLICATIONS

Quest Publications has entered the color comics market with the launching of their new title, **Djinn**. The series is by Stve Englehart, Steve Ditko and Steve Leialoha. The first half of the first issue reprints material which previously appeared in NMP's **Fantasy Illustrated** in full color for the first time as the first appearance was in black-and-white. The second half of the

book and the entire second book contain material that is all new. The series will last for two issues. Also from the same publisher is a black-and white title entitled **Lance Carrigan of the Galactic Legion**, written and drawn by Jayson Disbrow. The first appearance of this series was in **Future Gold,** a magazine formerly published by NMP. Disbrow was a prolific artist most of whose work was published by L.B. Cole in the 1950s.

ECLIPSE

Eclipse has purchased Doug Wildey's Rio to run in **Eclipse Monthly.** The western series was orginelly designed to appear in **Adventure Illustrated.** Dean Mullaney and Cat Yronwode are scheduled to relocate to San Francisco area with the next few months.



WARP GRAPHICS

Elfquest #16 will feature a special eight-page insert presenting the first appearance of "A Distant Soil", a new series written by Richard Pini and drawn by Colleen Doran. Doran will also plot the new series about a group of characters, some of whom come from the Earth, others of whom come from a distant star system, and one of whom comes from mythical Avalon. The new book will see release in November.

FIRST COMICS

Warp Draws To Conclusion

Warp, the play on which First Comics' title of the same name is based, is now playing in Detroit. The book itself is drawing to the conclusion of the adaptation of the play. After that the title will continue with original material created especially for comic book publication.

DRAGON'S TEETH

Mark Clegg of Dragon's Teeth Productions has announced the lineup for the first issue of their magazine to include Lele Dowling, Alex Toth, Frank Cirocco, Rich Geary, Ken Macklin and Tony Salmons. Alex Toth's twelve page storyis entitled Oolela and is a homage to Roy Crane and Noel Sickles.

VORTEX

Vortex has announced a new title by Dean Motter and Paul Rivoche which will appear in a comic book format, in full color, on a bi-monthly basis. The first issue will see publication in August and will present a very strange, fictional world.

ARCHIE COMICS

Bob Bolling Returns

Archie Comics has announced the return of Bob Bolling to the pages of **Archie and Me** where his work will again appear regularly.

©1982 Archie Comics

MARVEL COMICS

Power Pack is the newest title from Marvel Comics, by Louise Jones and newcomer June Brigman. The first issue will be released in December 1983 in double-size format and will feature Alex, Julie, Jack , and Kitty as four average young kids endowed with vast power.

DC NEWS TIDBITS

Steve and Nancy Bissette have a new daughter, Maia Rose, born April 29 at 1:42 A.M.

Firestorm #17 will be co-pencilled by Pat Broderick and George Tuska. The following issue will be pencilled by Tuska while #19 will be by Gene Colan. The new regular penciller, Rafael Kayanan, will begin with the annual and with issue #20.

Ron Randall will take over the art chores on **Arak** beginning with #26.

Star Trek will be drawn by Tom Sutton, among whose previous credits is **The Planet of the Apes** for Marvel Comics.

Alan Moore, whose fine work has graced the pages of England's **Warriors** magazine, is the new writer on the **Swamp Thing** beginning with issue #20.

Keith Giffen has relinquished the art chores on the **Omega Men** to Paul Power in order to pursue writing and drawing the new Creeper mini-series.

Star Raiders will be the first DC Graphic Novel, written by Elliot Maggin and drawn by Jose Garcia-Lopez.

There will be a major change in Green Lantern with issue #170.

Wonder Women #306 and **#309** will guest star the Black Canary.

Powerlords is a new mini-series from DC Comics. The book will be based on a toy from Revel. Mike Reischer will write the title and Texiera and Dee [both relative newcomers] will handle the art chores. The book will be about an intergalactic war in which the evil powers have taken control and exiled the last Powerlord to Earth after stripping him of his memory. Slowly his memory begins to return.

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MARVEL NEWS TIDBITS

John Romita, Jr. will be taking over the pencilling on the **X-Men** book as of issue #177. Paul Smith will be drawing the Falcon mini-series.

Coyote will be pencilled by Butch Guice beginning with issue #3 and will begin to be both pencilled and inked by Guice beginning with the following issue.

Void Indigo is the newest title from Epic Comics. The book is packaged by Star*Reach, written by Steve Gerber [and pencilled by Val Mayerick. Gerber will once again be working for the company that he is suing. Of course, this time he retains the ownership that he has fought for.

Tony Isabella will write **Moon Knight #34.**

Marvel Graphic Novel #7 featuring Killraven will ship by the time that you read this but the following novel featuring Dazzler has been rescheduled for the end of July.

Kull will revert to a general circulation title priced at $1.00 beginning with the third issue which will be released in August. Marvel Comics claims that this is due to circumstances beyond their control.

Thor #337 is the first by Simonson and Marvel expects major changes in the title and in reader reaction to the book.

From announcements from Marvel Comics it is not clear whether Spider-man really will become an Avenger.

X-Men #175 is a double issue and is entitled, "From the Ashes", concerning itself with Dark Phoenix.

Marvel Team Up #135—co-features Ariel of the X-Men.

The second issue of **Illyana and Storm** will ship August 9 as the first issue has been rescheduled for July 12.

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LISTINGS

SHIPPING JULY 12TH

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #220—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Chuck Patton, inks by Romeo Tanghal. The JLA and their Earth-2 counterparts.

WONDER WOMAN #308—Story by Dan Mishkin. Conclusion of the 2-parter guest-starring Black Canary. Plus Joey Cavalieri and Tim Burgard.

ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #27—Story by Roy Thomas, art by Ron Randall and Alfredo Alcala.

BLACKHAWK #264—Cover by Howard Chaykin. Feature story by Mark Evanier, writer, and Dan Spiegle, artist.

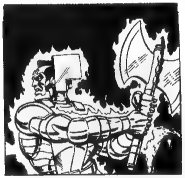
DC COMICS PRESENTS #83—Teaming of the 'man of Steel and Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld. Story by Dan Mishkin, Gary Cohn, art by Ernie Colon.

THE FURY OF FIRESTORM #18—Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Pat Brokerick, inks by Rodin Rodriguez. "Reactor." Featuring the creation of new Firestorm villain: Tokamak, The Human Reactor...otherwise known as Henry Hewitt, Chairman of the 2000 Committee.

ALL-STAR SQUADRON ANNUAL #2—Story by Roy Thomas, art by Jerry Ordway. The All Star Squadron, the JSA, Infinity Inc., and The Secret Society Of Super-Villains and the world is at stake. Special features and pin-ups. This story will conclude in **Firestorm Annual #1.**

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #42—Superman Vs. Aliens.

AMETHYST, PRINCESS OF GEMWORLD #7—Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, art by Ernie Colon.



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VIGILANTE #2—Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by Keith Pollard.

SHIPPING JULY 19TH

BATMAN #365—Story by Doug Moench, art by Don Newton and Alfredo Alcala. Cover by Ed Hannigan and Dick Giordeno.

THE FLASH #327—Story by Cary Bates, art by Carmine Infantino and Dennis Jensen. Cover by Infantino and Rodin Rodriguez.

G.I. COMBAT #255—The Haunted Tank concludes its three-parter with "A Trinket from Time." Story by Robert Kanigher, art by Sam Glanzman.

SUPERMAN #389—Story by Cary Bates, art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt. Vertox returns to Earth.

STAR RAIDERS GRAPHIC NOVEL—Written by Elliot S! Maggin and drawn and colored by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez, a tale of spacefaring free-booters who must defend the galaxy they know against Zylons, an insect race, and their sinister queen.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #37—Marv Wolfman, story, George Perez is back on pencils, Romeo Tanghal, inks. The team-up of the Titans and The Outsiders—with The Batman and Robin caught in the middle.

NEWS

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THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #19—Story by Martin Pasko, pencils by Steve Bissette, inks by John Totleben.

THE OMEGA MEN #8—Story by Roger Slifer, pencils by Paul Power, inks by Mike De Carlo. A quiet pause in the midst of recent turbulence. A time of reunions.

SHIPPING JULY 26TH

GREEN LANTERN #170—A new approach to the Emerald Gladiator commences this month.

GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW #2—By Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams. The second representation.

SGT ROCK #382—Robert Kanigher, writer; Frank Redondo, artist.

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #305—Story by Paul Levitz, art by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt.

BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #4—Story by Mike W. Barr, story and cover art by Jim Aparo.

THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL #13—Story by Paul Kupperberg, art by Carmin Infantino and Bob Oksner.

WARLORD #75—Story by Cary Burkett, pencils by Dan Jurgens, inks by Dan Adkins. "All Dreams Must Pass." Saaba has returned and her sinister plan is revealed. Morgan and Krystovar learn more about the ancient Atlantean cassette just as an attact is launched on Shamballah by the New Atlanteans.

THRILLER #1—Robert Loren Fleming, writer Trevor Von Eeden, artist.

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THE NEW TEEN TITANS BENEFIT ISSUE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DRUG AWARENESS CAMPAIGN—This magazine was prepared for the U.S. government by DC Comics and distributed in classrooms as a means of helping combat drug abuse by children. Titans completists will want to own this: it's by Marv Wolfman, with art by George Perez and Dick Giordano. It also introduces a new DC character: The Protector.

SHIPPING AUGUST 2ND

ACTION COMICS #548—Story by Marv Wolfman, art by Gil Kane.

DETECTIVE COMICS #532—A tale of The Batman by Doug Moench, writer, Gene Colan, penciller.

JONAH HEX #78—Script by Michael Fleisher, art by Dick Ayers and Tony De Zuniga.

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #297—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils Kraft, art by Ross Andru.

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #27—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Richard Howell, Inks by Larry Houston, cover by Jerry Ordway.

THE SWORD OF THE ATON #3—Script by Jan Strnad, art by G Kane. "Mourning's End." The Aton makes final preparations for th revolution...and meanwhile Jean ha arrived in South America.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTI #13—Paul Kupperberg, writer; Ja Duursema, penciller; Tom Mandrake inker.

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THE FURY OF FIRESTORM ANNUAL #1—Story by Gerry Conway, art by Pat Broderrick.

SUPERBOY #47—Story by Paul Kupperberg, art by Alex Saviuk and Kurt Schaffenberger.
Plus: Dial H for Hero by E. Nelson Bridwell and Bob Rozakis, writers Howard Bender, penciller.

CAMELOT 3000 #10—Story by Mike W. Barr, pencils by Brian Bolland, inks by Terry Austin. The maxi-series starts to draw to its conclusion.

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THE THING #5—Written by John Byrne, pencils by Ron Wilson. In this issue, Spider-Man, Wonder-Man and the savage She-Hulk encounter Ben Grim.

DAZZLER #29—Written by Jim Shooter, pencils by Frank Springer.

THE FALCON #1 (limited Series) —Written by Jim Owsley, pencils by Paul Smith, inks by Vince Collette.

THE NEW MUTANTS #9—Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Bob McLeod.

DAREDEVIL #200—Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by William Johnson. The revived and revenge-crazed Bullseye, the deadliest assassin alive, comes after DD.

KING CONAN #19—Written by Alan Zelentz, pencils by Marc Sylvestri, inks by Rudy Nebres.

MOON KNIGHT SPECIAL EDITION #1(Limited Series)—The original MOON KNIGHT stories that Doug Moench and Bill Sienkiewicz created for **Hulk Magazine**: "The Big Bleckmail" from **Hulk #13** and "Countdown to Dark" from **#14**

SHIPPING JULY 12TH

SPIDER-MAN #246—Written by Roger Stern, pencils by John Romita, Jr. Spider-Man, at last punched out by J. Jonah Jameson...Mary Jane Watson, the toast of Broadway...The Black Cat breaks the bank at Monte Carlo...and Peter Parker's greatest fear is revealed...or is it? A special off-beat issue guest-starring...the Watcher.

CAPTAIN AMERICA #287 —Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencile by Mike Zeck, inks by John Beatty.

INDIANA JONES #11—Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Kerry Gammill.

HAWKEYE #34 (limited series) — Written and pencilled by Mark Gruenwald, inks by Brett Breeding.

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RETURN OF THE JEDI— [Limited Series]—Written by Archie Goodwin, art by Al Williamson and Carlos Garzon.

CRYSTAR #4—Written by Jo Duffy, pencils by Ricardo Vilamonte, inks by Danny Bulanadi. Plus a cover painting by Michael Golden.

MOON KNIGHT #34 [Direct Only]—Written by Tony Isabella, pencils by Wade Hampton. Deadly germ-warfare toxins have infected street kids.

THOR #337—Walt Simonson writing, pencilling and inking, begins a year-long stay.

MICRONAUTS #55 [Direct Only]—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Butch Guice, inks by Kelly Jones.

KULL #4[Limited Series/Direct Only]—Written by Alan Zelenetz. Cover painting by Michael Golden. John Bolton, Butch Guice and Bo Sienkiewicz draw several tales.

IRON MAN ANNUAL #6—Written by Peter Gillis, pencils by Luke McDonnell. Iron Man, a.k.a. James Rhodes, is reduced to a pawn in a struggle between the Eternals and the Deviants.

SHIPPING JULY 19TH

INCREDIBLE HULK #289—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Joe Sinnott.

ROM #48—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey.

AVENGERS #237—Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Al Milgrom, inks by Joe Sinnott. Peter Parker is broke, which is nothing new. But then he discovers the apparent answer to all his dreams: Join the Avengers and make big bucks!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #152—Written by Michael Fleischer, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Ernie Ghan.

MARVEL TALES #157—SPIDER-MAN #19.

POWER MAN/IRON FIST #99—Written by Kurt Busiek, pencils by Ernie Chan.

G.I. JOE #17—Written by Larry Hama, pencils by Mike Vosburg, inks by Jon D'Agostino.

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CLOAK AND DAGGER #2(Limited Series)—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Rick Leonard, inks by Terry Austin.

MARVEL TAILS #1—Written by Tom DeFalco, pencils by Mark Armstrong, inks by Joe Albelo. "If He Should Punch Me" features the origin of the Hulk-Bunny. Also, Goose Rider, Peter Parker the Spectacular Spider-Ham, Captain Americat, and more.

SHIPPING JULY 28TH

FANTASTIC FOUR #260—A John Byrne production. Without Reed Richards, can the Fantastic Three prevail against Doctor Doom?

IRON MAN #176—Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by Luke McDonnell, inks by Steve Mitchell.

PETER PARKER #84—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils and inks by Dave Simons.

MARVEL TEAM UP #135—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Ron Frenz, inks by Mike Esposito. Spidey and the X-Men's youngest heroine, Ariel.

DEFENDERS #125—Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Don Perlin, inks by Kim DeMulder.

STAR WARS #77—Written by Jo Duffy, pencils by Ron Frenz, inks by Tom Palmer.

KRULL #1(Limited Series)—Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Bret Blevins. Beginning the two-part adaptation of the Columbia film.

ALPHA FLIGHT #4—A John Byrne production, guest-starring the Submariner and the Invisible Girl, and revealing the origin of Marrina.

OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #11— Subterraneans through Ursa Major.

THOR ANNUAL #11—Presenting the life and times of Thor the Mighty. Alan Zelenetz, Bob Hall and Vince Colletta.

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EPIC ILLUSTRATED #20—Cover by Aurthur Suydam.

DREADSTAR #8—Vanth Dreadstar and company take on a planetary blockade created by the evil Instrumentality. Plus Berni Wrightson: "The Interstellar Toybox!"

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #93—Written by Michael Fleischer, pencils by John Buscema. Cover by Bob Larkin.

MARVEL FANFARE #11—Part two of the Black Widow's solo series, written by Ralph Macchio, with art and cover by George Perez.

BLIP #8

MARVEL AGE #8

NEWS

AARDVARK VANAHEIM

CEREBUS #51—Dave Sim. A new storyline begins. Black and White.

SWORDS OF CEREBUS VOL. V—Features a six-page Cerebus "vignette" by Barry Windsor-Smith. Also reprints **Cerebus # 17-20.** Black and White.

AMERICOMICS

AMERICOMICS SPECIAL #1—Dan St. John and Greg Guler. The Sentinels of Justice featuring Blue Beetle, Capt. Atom, Nightshade, and the Question.

CANIS

ISMET #6—Black and White.

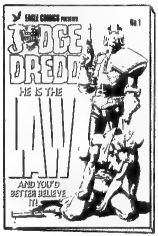
CHANCE ENTERPRISES

DOMINO CHANCE #5—Adventures of roach by Kevin Leneagh. Parody of Niven's Ringworld. Black and white.

COMICO

COMICO PRIMER #4 Black and white.

EAGLE COMICS



ECLIPSE COMICS

DNAGENTS #5—Mark Evanier a Will Meugnoit.

ECLIPSE MONTHLY #2

SABRE #6—Further adventures Don McGregor and Billy Graham.

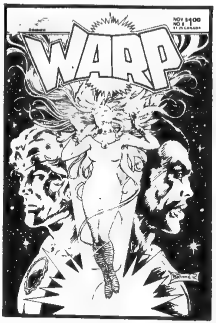
FANTACO

DEJA VU #23—Mike Kaluta cover. Reprints Jeff Jones, Mike Kaluta and Berni Wrightson. Black and white.

GATES OF EDEN#2—Jeff Jones front cover. Frank Miller back cover. Art and stories by George Perez, Neal Adams, Kim Deitch, Spain and many more. 48 pages megazine-sized on bright white paper.

FIRST COMICS™

AMERICAN FLAGG #2—Cover by Howard Chaykin. "Jukebox Saturday Night!", written, pencilled and inked by Howard Chaykin.



WARP #8—Cover by Frank Brunner. "Paradox Lost," adapted and pencilled by Frank Brunner, scripted by Peter Gillis, and inked by Mike Gustovich. Plus Valeria: "A Little Knowledge..." written by Gillis, pencilled by Bill Willingham, inked by Bruce Patterson.

JON SABLE FREELANCE #8—Cover by Mike Grell. "A Deadly Shade of Violet: The Origin, Part 4," written, pencilled and inked by Mike Grell.

STARSLAYER #10—Cover by Lenin Delsol and Mike Gustovich. "Bounty" written by John Ostrander,

pencilled by Delsol, inked by Gustovich. "Grimjack: Mortal Gods, part 1" written by Ostrander, drawn by Timothy Truman.

Graphik

E-MAN #8—Cover by Joe Staton. "Alien Hot Wax", written by Martin Pasko, pencilled by Joe Staton, inked by Rick Burchett. "Cutey Bunny" by Joshua Quagmire.

PIGMENTS UNLIMITED #3—Black and white comic format. "Starchild" by Van Meter and Tanquay and "Shadow Master" by Van Meter and Keith Royster.

ARCANE #1—Black and white comic format. Arcane by Van Meter and Frank Turner.

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JOHN C. PRODUCTION

HALL OF FAME #2—Reprints Thunder Agent stories by Wood, Kane and others.

THUNDER AGENTS #1—New stories by Blyberg.

BOLD ADVENTURE #1—"Time Force" by Bill Dubay and Rudy Nebres. Other features are "Spitfire," a World War II adventure by John Severin and "Weirdling" by Bill Dubay and Trevor Von Eeden.

SILVER STAR #5—Jack Kirby continues as Morgan Miller gathers together more of "the next breed." inker is D. Bruce Berry.

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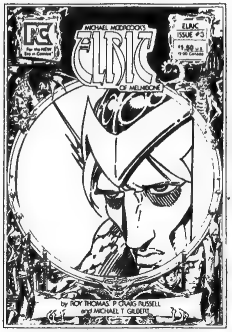
ALIEN WORLDS #4—Dave Stevens contributes cover and lead story. Four-pager, "Princess Pam" features pencils and script by editor Bruce Jones and inks by Dave Stevens. Also a two-pager illustrated by Jeff Jones, a reprint of an Al Williamson/Frank Frazetta story. Ken Steacy contributes six pages, and Aldolpho Buylla illustrates eight pages. **Baxter**

ELRIC OF MILNIBONE #3—by Roy Thomas, P. Craig Russell, and Michael T. Gilbert. Delayed from June shipping. In this chapter Elric apparently drowns, but is saved by the water-god, Straasha. Elric's evil cousin, believing him dead, places himself on the throne, setting the stage for a deadly confrontation. In the finale, Elric comes face to face with the evil god, Arioch. **Baxter**



BERNI WRIGHTSON: MASTER OF THE MACABRE #3—Two stories originally done for Warren; "Nightfall" written by Bill Dubay and illustrated by Berni Wrightson and "A Martian Saga" written by Nicola Cuti and illustrated by Berni Wrightson plus two stories originally presented in **Bedtime Stories**; "King of the Mountain" and "The Last Hunters," both written and illustrated by Berni Wrightson. **Baxter**

JOE KUBERT SCHOOL PRESENTS—One shot title, produced with the cooperation of the Joe Kubert School. A selection of work by current students at the Kubert School. The selection includes:"Crown of thorns,""Tate's Hell,""Things that go Bump in the Night,""The Dragon,""Physcial Barriers,""The trophy,"and "Criminal Operations."

EDGE OF CHAOS #3—by Grey Morrow. The conclusions of the three-issue mini-series.

KITCHEN SIN

SPIRIT #42— color section. Ma
zine sized.

INFORMER/ NOBLE COMICS

JUSTICE MACHINE ANNUAL #1—Michael Golden cover. Story by Bill Loebs and Bill Reinhold.

QUEST COMICS

DJINN #1—Steve Englehart/Steve Ditko/Steve Leialoha. Two issue mini-series. Each comic presents two of the four chapters of this series in full-color comic format. First half-chapter is a reprint from NMP. All the rest are previously unpublished and all new.

WARP

ELFQUEST #16—This issue will also contain a special 8-page insert previewing the new science-fantasy series "A Distant Soil" by Richard Pini and Colleen Doran.

SPECTRUM COMICS

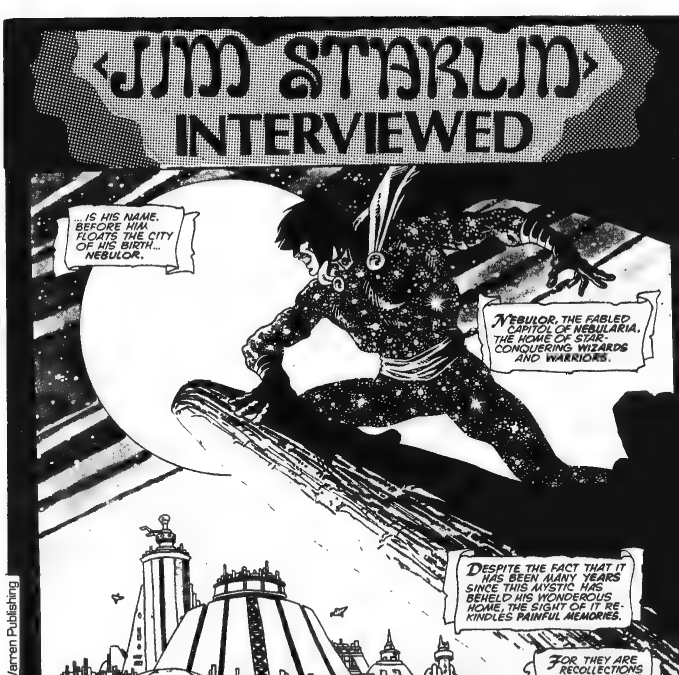
SURVIVORS #2—Now 24 pages of adventure; in color.

RED CIRCLE COMICS GROUP

KATY KEENE #1—Classic reprints of cosmic cheesecake by Bill Woggon.

BLUE RIBBON #1—Mr. Justic by Harris and Ditko. Steranko cover.

FLY #3—Further adventures by Harris and Ditko. Steranko cover.


JIM STARLIN
INTERVIEWED
...IS HIS NAME. BEFORE HIM FLOATS THE CITY OF HIS BIRTH... NEBULOR.
NEBULOR, THE FABLED CAPITOL OF NEBULARIA, THE HOME OF STAR-CONQUERING WIZARDS AND WARRIORS.
DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE THIS MYSTIC HAS BEHELD HIS WONDEROUS HOME, THE SIGHT OF IT RE-KINDLES PAINFUL MEMORIES.
FOR THEY ARE RECOLLECTIONS OF PRIDE, BATTLE, PASSION, TRAGEDY, AND...

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CF: The first thing I'd like to ask is who is Jim Starlin? Tell me something about yourself as a person.

Starlin: I like to read science-fiction. I like to read classics. I like Dickens. I'm going through "Sophie's Choice" right now. I like looking at painters and all kinds of illustrators such as DuLac, Lindsey, Gibson and others. I like the woods I live up in. I live up in the Catskill Mountains. I like wandering around there. I like my work.

CF: Do you fish or hunt?

Starlin: No, I just sort of wander around, sometimes camp out. I just sort of enjoy the place. It's beautiful to look at. Even now, during the winter, we get beautiful clouds that come in over the mountains that look like something Turner painted. It's just a gorgeous place.

CF: Do you do any landscape or scenery painting?

Starlin: No, almost all of my work is fantasy of some kind – fantasy science-fiction.

CF: I know that's what you publish wasn't sure if you worked for yo own enjoyment.

Starlin: Publishing keeps me busy, I haven't any time. I enjoy wh I'm doing so it's not a matter of r being able to do the kind of art tha like. I am doing it and getting paid f it, so I'm quite happy that way.

CF: So that scenery is just a ni

back-drop for relaxation.

Starlin: Right now I'm working out on my studio [my studio is an enclosed front porch] during the summer. I've got windows all around me which just show out onto the mountains. There's a little pond in front of our place. It's gorgeous. During the winter, I'm up in the guest bedroom with no window that I can look out of which is kind of depressing. Hopefully next year we'll actually get a real studio built. We're going to begin doing it this autumn and see if we can get it together before winter comes again.

CF: You grew up in Detroit, which is a much more urban environment than where you are now.

Starlin: Well, mine was more suburban. It was one of the factory towns for the auto companies, a little town called Berkley. Everyone in the town worked in auto factories in some way or another.

CF: This was the standard Levitown type of suburb, I presume.

Starlin: There were a lot of brick houses. It was an older suburb. The town right next door, Royal Oak, was the first city where Henry Ford built houses for the auto factory workers and I'm sure Berkley came out of that.

CF: So you have always lived in a basically non-urban environment.

Starlin: Well, I spent several years in New York. I lived right there in Manhattan for a long time. I've always felt comfortable being out in a less hectic and hurried environment.

CF: I've been noticing an interesting correlation between where an artist like the woods I live up in. I live up in example, Frank Miller lives in a much more urban environment and his stories tend to be rectangular blocks of giant buildings whereas you, who have lived in a less hectic environment, tend to have quite beautiful scenery and backgrounding in your work, especially in Metamorphosis/Oddessey.

Starlin: That's rather funny. During the Metamorphosis/Oddessey, when I was working on that, I was living in New York. Now that I'm working on Dreadstar, which is set mostly in giant metropolitan areas of outerspace, I'm in the woods. So if anything it's an inverted theory you've got there with me at least. But when I was doing Captain Marvel—in that book the scenes I enjoyed pencilling and inking the best were the garden scenes and it was just about the time that we had moved up here. So I can see a little bit of that idea showing up.

CF: I think there's got to be an effect of how you live overflowing into your work.

Starlin: Yes, I've seen it in different folks. Like Bernie Wrightson-he lived up here during the time he was doing Swamp Thing and Swamp Thing ended up going out into the woods a lot, into some of the most gorgeously drawn woods I'd ever seen.

CF: It makes for more realistic drawings because you're drawing what you're seeing.

Starlin: I know with Miller and his city environments, he actually went up on top of buildings to sketch water towers so he would have them right. I mean, he wanted the environment in his comic books to be like it really is.

CF: He seems to be very conscientious about what he is drawing.

Starlin: Fanatical is the word you're looking for. All the good ones are.

CF: In movies, who do you tend to enjoy and what do you go to see?

Starlin: Pretty good cross section in movies. I enjoy movies because they're

"THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT THE FATHER FROM EXILING HIS SON WAS A STRONG SENSE OF TRADITION AND FAMILY LINE.
"IN TURN, ONLY A PROMISE MADE A DYING MOTHER KEPT THE SON FROM ABANDONING NEBULARIA.

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the basis of comic book story-telling or vice versa, whoever you're talking to. Each has their own theory on it. This year I've gone to see everything from the "Texas Chain Saw Massacre" to "Ghandi". As long as I hear the movie is good, I try to go see it. If I find out ahead of time it's not very well put together, I'll skip it.

CF: Do you rely on critics' or on friends' opinions?

Starlin: Both.

CF: Critics tend to be notoriously unreliable.

Starlin: Sometimes I enjoy going to see what they panned to check out the reasons. I recently read a review of "The Verdict" with Paul Newman. The thing that the reviewer was most upset with was exactly what made the movie work for me. I have to take every comment I get before seeing a movie with a little grain of salt.

CF: You began drawing comics for yourself when you were a very young man and then began to do work for a lot of amateur publications. Where did you first start publishing?

Starlin: Allen Milgrom a friend of mine from way back in junior high. He turned me on to these fanzines. Allen was a very heavy fan. He knew all about these things. I liked reading comic books and I had some of them in the loft in my garage...

CF: Which ones?

Starlin: Mostly Superman and Batman at the time. This was back in the late fifties/early sixties when these were the only super-hero comic books that were being produced.

CF: That's before Marvel then.

Starlin: Oh, way before Marvel. The only heroes at that time were Wonder Woman, Superman, Batman, and John Jones and I think Adam Strange was popping in there somewhere along the way.

CF: Then the Flash came along.

Starlin: That was even later. I remember picking up those first issues of those things from the drug stores. So as I said, Allen turned me on to these fanzines and I did some work for the Texas Trio.

CF: That's when you did the American Eagle and Dr. Weird.

Starlin: Yes, and all those things I'd just as soon forget about at this point.

CF: Actually, even at that stage, there was quite a lot of nice work them.

Starlin: Most of those things t you just mentioned were done m later also. They were done while I w in the service.

CF: Were you in the service as illustrator?

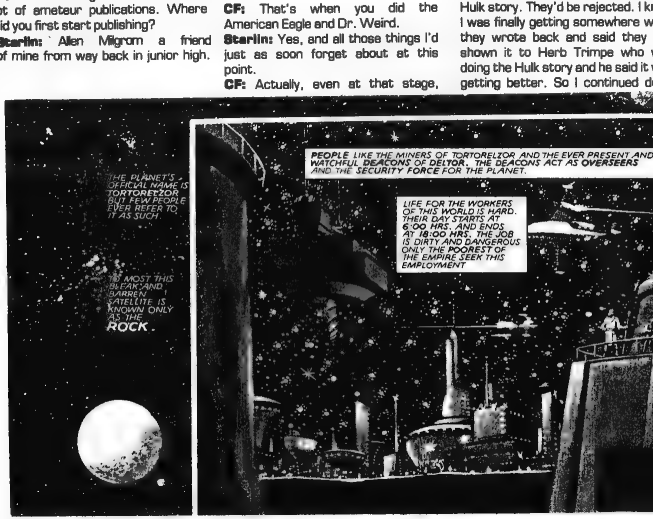
Starlin: I was in there as photographer. I was in ae photography, stationed in Phillipines, and I was doing a lot flying over Nam at the time.

CF: You were with the Air Force?

Starlin: Navy. It's very funny, I sp three and a half years in the Navy I've never seen a ship other than fr the air.

CF: You continued to do th amateur strips. Did the comic co panies notice what you were doing the time or did you bring it to their tention.

Starlin: I would occasionally send Hulk story I drew. I was a H fanatic. Every year I would send Hulk story. They'd be rejected. I ku I was finally getting somewhere w they wrote back and said they shown it to Herb Trimpe who doing the Hulk story and he said it getting better. So I continued d


THE PLANET'S OFFICIAL NAME IS TORTORELZOR BUT FEW PEOPLE EVER REFER TO IT AS SUCH.
MOST OF THIS BARREN AND BARREN SATELLITE IS KNOWN ONLY AS THE ROCK.
PEOPLE LIKE THE MINERS OF TORTORELZOR AND THE EVER PRESENT AND WATCHFUL DEACONS OF DELTOR. THE DEACONS ACT AS OVERSEERS AND THE SECURITY FORCE FOR THE PLANET.
LIFE FOR THE WORKERS OF THIS WORLD IS HARD. THEIR DAY STARTS AT 6:00 HRS. AND ENDS AT 18:00 HRS. THE JOB IS DIRTY AND DANGEROUS ONLY THE POOREST OF THE EMPIRE SEEK THIS EMPLOYMENT

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DEATH FLAMES FROM THE DEACON'S BATON BUT FAILS TO REACH ITS MARK.
THE SWORD SNATCHES THE BATON'S FIERY RAYS FROM THE VERY AIR.

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that and finally was able to sell two jobs to Joe Orlando for his mystery books. They were a couple of two pagers. I decided at that point, seeing as how my finances back in Detroit were dwindling to next to nothing, that I might as well shoot the whole wad and I took a shot at going to New York. I was lucky enough to show up there at the time when they were hiring anybody who came across the state line with a pencil in their hand. I started working up at Marvel doing cover layouts for other artists to finish off. I worked with John Romita a little bit doing layouts on Spiderman for him so that he could catch up with his dead-line. I eventually got work up there doing a few covers, a horror story, a love story here and there. I finally did Iron Man for two issues and went on from there.

CF: When you first began doing the amateur strips, were you still in high school?

Starlin: I started doing them in high school and went on through the service. In the Navy I was doing Dr. Weird and the American Eagle which is – The American Eagle is quite a story all in itself. When I did it I was stationed in the Phillipines, and it was printed and I had it sent back to me when it was printed. Like a fool I showed it around. At the time it was kind of radical for comic books and within two months I found myself up on charges in the service on – some of the charges were based on what I'd done in the books – unmilitary conduct and a couple of other charges I've forgotten. There were thirty-six of them leveled against me at the time. All of them ended up getting thrown out because the people who were doing it were obviously out to get me for reasons of their own.

CF: Why were they after you?

Starlin: Bad attitude on my part. It was the Vietnam war and a lot of that sort of thing went on at that point.

CF: So you were a dove in Vietnam?

Starlin: It didn't start out like that. I was raised in Detroit during the '60s – it was about '68 – and there were anti-war protests going on in other parts of the country, but Detroit was still very blue collar, middle-class. I joined the service, was sent over to Sicily for a year and a half and had a good time there; I rather enjoyed it. I was doing aerial photography so that the Italian government could get maps for what Sicily looked like. They hadn't had any since World War II. I worked in civilian clothes and was making good money at the time. According to the Sicilian standard of living, a Navy serviceman was making a pretty good living. My tour of duty in Sicily ended and by that time the anti-war sentiment had grown so strong that even folks in the service like myself were beginning to question the morality of what our country was doing. I suddenly found myself over there on my next tour. I didn't like it. I made it very clear that I wasn't happy about what I was doing and they didn't like it. A lot of times I was given bad assignments because of things I was stupid enough to say out loud.

CF: What did you object to about the U.S. presence in Nam?

Starlin: Let me put it this way; I was an aerial photographer. I'd be taking pictures, I'd bring them back and develop them and everything looked like craters on the moon from these shots I had. Everything was bombed out. It didn't seem to make much sense to me why we were over there. It seemed like we were doing nothing but protecting our commerical in-

terests over there. It still seems to me to this day that if there hadn't been any interference from the the Americans and the French that it probably would have ended up the same way, but it probably would have been a lot less bloody.

CF: Wasn't that only because we pulled out?

Starlin: We had laid a couple decades of bloody war at their feet. They were obviously going to take over anyhow. We sat there for close to two decades, keeping this war going. The North Vietnamese were not heroes either.

THE EMPIRICAL GALAXY IS A STRANGE AND BRUTAL REGION, TORN BY OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF WAR BETWEEN TWO COSMIC SUPER POWERS WHICH CALL THEMSELVES THE MONARCHY AND THE INSTRUMENTALITY.
THE MONARCHY IS A TWELVE CENTURY OLD DYNASTY, FOUNDED AND MAINTAINED BY THE ROYAL (AND HIGHLY INBRED) DYLOGO FAMILY AND ITS ARMIES.
THE INSTRUMENTALITY IS A POWERFUL POLITICAL-MYSTICAL-RELIGIOUS ORDER WHICH RULES ITS HALF OF THE GALAXY THROUGH FEAR OF DAMNATION, HEAVENLY EDICTS, OCCASIONAL MASS INQUISITION AND AN ARMY OF HOLY WARRIORS.

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They were just as corrupt as th government we were supporting we It was siding two bad sides again each other. We were backing one a the Chinese and the Russians we backing the other. It was a mess. me, they should have been just left their own, let them settle it out a we could have dealt with whoever e ended up being a winner then on political level.

CF: It's unfortunate, but no one ev seems content to leave anythi alone — all through history.

Starlin: Well, this is hindsight talki on my part.

CF: Even if we'd left them, it's unlik that everyone else would have l them alone.

Starlin: We've always had a tende cy in this country to think that we c not deal with communist countrie For a long time we thought that they were a communist country th were the enemy. Only recently we found that we can deal with the P Chinese. If we had let Vietn become North Vietnam, you kn Communist Vietnam, we could ha dealt with them on a political level. T situation probably wouldn't have be as bad. The regime that ended up power probably wouldn't have been terrible and blood thirsty if th hadn't had two decades of pounded into their environme Chances are, one side or the oth would have won within a year or t and their economy and their life st would have stablized by this point.

CF: That's assuming that if we h stayed out, everyone else would h stayed out. For instance, we stay out of Africa, but that hasn't k others out or other nations from p ting armies there.

Starlin: We haven't really stayed of Africa all that much. We're doin lot of it through the British. British have always kept th presence. If you're going to brea down to "Them folks" and us, yo have to consider anything that's be done by the Western powers same as everything being done by Eastern powers. You sort of have break it up into either side. Western powers have had their fluence in Africa, so have the East block. None of the third world co

tries have really gotten off without our interference.

CF: Returning to when you first started working for **Starstudded** and other publications, which artists in the comic industry were you looking at as far as influence and style?

Starlin: At that point Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko were the idols I worshipped. Just about anybody whose work was carried, I was looking at. I read everything. I was impressed by Infantino and Kane. Buscema came along at that time. I've always kept track of what's going on in the business as best I could no matter what my situation has been. Everything that appears influences me in one way or another.

CF: When you first started doing the strips, the Jack Kirby influence showed itself very strongly.

Starlin: Yes, I was in a flood of people who were coming in who were raised on Jack Kirby. We had to boost ourselves out of it slowly but surely. There were dozens of others. Steranko came in that way, Smith, myself — I could go on. There must be at least a half dozen more.

CF: I think that Jack Kirby had almost a revolutionary impact on the way comics were done.

Starlin: They had so much more excitement than anything else being done at that time.

CF: Were you actually writing these strips right from the beginning?

Starlin: Well, no. They wouldn't let me write them at first. I was actually plotting them from the beginning. Half the time I was plotting them. The horror stories and the love stories were all from somebody else's plot. As soon as I got into doing the super-heroes, I'd either actually plot them, as I did with the first Iron Man, or I'd work with Steve Gerber as I did with the second Iron Man. We talked the plot all out. I had my finger in the pie at that point. It wasn't until my third issue of Captain Marvel that Roy — I told him I wanted to write — he said, "Okay, what we can do is, we have three chapters in this book. You write one of the chapters and if I like it, if it's as good as our standards, you can write your own book." And I did it and he liked it. He said, "You can start writing your own stuff."

CF: From the beginning on Iron Man, a number of concepts and characters emerged that pretty much stayed with your work throughout.

Starlin: I had a number of characters I had created before I ever got into the business. Most of them were based from concepts, Freudian concepts I had learned in a psych class in college. There were Thanos, Eros, Mentor and the Destroyer. We needed a plot concept; I liked my characters so I sort of integrated them into the artwork and into the storyline as best I could. Rather than falling back on Marvel's old characters, I was introducing new ones.

CF: Those characters seem to still be kicking around the Marvel Universe, with one becoming an Avenger and one becoming a Defender, in fact.

Starlin: The one who is becoming a Defender wasn't actually my character. I revamped her — Moon Dragon. She was actually created by Mike Friedrich and George Tuska. She had a different name. She was called Madame McEvil at that point. I don't remember if I came up with the new name or if Roy — somebody came up with Moon Dragon and she became part of the Titan series from there. She was sort of cannibalized and put back together to become a Titan.

CF: I don't remember Madame McEvil...

Starlin: In one issue of Iron Man she appeared as Madame McEvil.

CF: Starfox is becoming an Avenger.

Starlin: And his name is going to be changing once more. It turns out Starfox — there's trouble with that name. A movie company just contacted Marvel and told them that Starfox was the name of a movie they were making and that they would have to change it or legal action would be taken. So it looks like Eros/Starfox is going to be getting another name soon.

CF: What you became well known for — because of Warlock and Captain Marvel — was killing off super-heroes. Recently that has become something of an issue. The whole concept of the "Big Bang" and the Little Bang" and Jim Shooter's planned wipe-out of the Marvel Universe.

Starlin: I'd rather think that what I was doing with them was exploring death — life and death. These characters deal with a game that is so far from what you and I know as reality. They're dealing with life and death as an everyday occurance. What I wanted to do with the Captain Marvel and the Warlock series was to explore the losing side of this whole super-hero business. Most of the time, the way sales are, if a book is successful, a character has to be continued on. He can't die. He can't lose. I was lucky enough to have Captain Marvel and Warlock to play with and to finish. Neither were big financial successes. Warlock's book had died off so I was given the opportunity to kill off Warlock. Captain Marvel had taken a nose-dive in sales and the book had been discontinued. They wanted to revamp the character in new form. I was allowed to do that again.

CF: Is this when they wanted to create the female version of Captain Marvel?

Starlin: At that time there wasn't any idea of what the version would be.

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It was just going to be a new Captain Marvel because the old one had become too convoluted over the years to make sense out of it. Or to make sense out of in a sentence or less, which is the rule of thumb to follow for a good super hero to be done.

CF: This gave you the opportunity to do what you wanted with the existing character.

Starlin: Right. In neither case did I do it just for gratuitous thrills or for the fact that death sells. At that point there were no sales figures showing that death sells as there are now. I have no objection to characters being killed off which seemed to be the "scream and holler" in fandom about six months ago with Shooter supposedly going to kill off half the people in the universe. I'll get back to that too — there's a story on that. If it's done just to kill the characters off to pick up sales, no I don't like that. I think that sort of diminishes the art form. But if there is a story to be told or something to be examined and the only way it can be done is to have somebody die, well people do that in life; people die. The basis of Marvel Comics was to make realistic superheroes — as realistic as they can be. Part of that means that they must eventually come to an end.

CF: The company had lacked the courage to take a character who is financial success, who is making money, and allow anything very radical or drastic to happen to that character.

Starlin: That wouldn't make any sense. In a business area, it wouldn't make sense. We have to face it, we are in a business. I understand why Spiderman hasn't changed for years. It sells the way it is.

CF: Is that why the edict came down that there should be no change, just the appearance of change?

Starlin: I don't know about that, but that makes perfect sense. It's successful.

CF: Isn't that, in the long run, stifling?

Starlin: It's stifling, but everything comes to that point. Superman came to that point in the '50s. The same thing happened with Batman. It's part of the evolution. If you can not get out of an idea, you go with it 'till it becomes dead and then you do revisions on it.

CF: You did the Superman character for a while. What did you think of the character? How did you approach the character? What did you think of all the obsolete baggage that does hang around that character?

Starlin: Superman is a double-edged sword. Superman is the ultimate hero. He's the basis for all the superheroes. He's the father. it was a heavy charge for me to do him. It gave me a chance to take him as far as I thought the concept could really go. Unfortunately there is baggage connected with Superman. Superman is another success. There were certain stories I ran into opposition about doing, just because they were not stories that Superman should do. There were certain ideas I had to sneak in because of Superman's past history. It was a kick doing it. Superman is supposedly the ultimate thing to do in this business.

CF: How do you view the character? Do you view him as this incredibly powerful alien walking among men or do you view him as this small town boy

BUT I'M THROUGH WITH FAILURE... NEVER AGAIN.
OEDI, YOU BETTER CLEAR OUT. WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TRY MAY CAUSE ANOTHER CAVE IN.
NO WAY, WANTH! YOU AND I CAME TO THIS DANCE TOGETHER.
WE'LL LEAVE TOGETHER.
©1983 J.P. Stelfreeze

from Smallville?

Starlin: I view him as this incredible force, somewhat a naive force. I tried plotting out the stories. They didn't want me to write my own Superman stories. I guess I can't blame them. I pictured him as this, not dumb, but sort of naive force, who has this incredible power, but a lot of times, for all his intelligence, doesn't think out what's happening and gets himself into some rather dumb situations because of it. Superman, I always felt, was not the thinking man's hero. He's the child avenger.

CF: He has so much power that he's never learned how to use it.

Starlin: They have had stories along the way where they have had him grow, but then the next month he immediately goes back to doing what he did all along.

CF: When you can move a planet with your pinky you don't go in for physical or mental training that often. I guess Batman, who has less power, has to do that a great deal more.

Starlin: Right. The complete antithesis of Superman. That's why they make a great team.

CF: The villain you did in the **DC Presents** issues seemed to physically resemble Thanos a great deal. Was that deliberate?

Starlin: Well, not deliberate so much as I needed a physical threat that appeared more powerful than Superman. The fact that he was large and bulky tended to make him look a lot like Thanos or Darkseid. What I tried to do with him was give him shorter, stubbier legs, just to sort of change the image a little bit. I find the idea of a huge hulking menace very appealing. I sort of repeated that image in the Dreadstar series. I figure great evil should have a great evil appearance.

CF: It's interesting that you mention Darkseid. The work that you have done with Thanos seems to resemble the Forth World that Jack Kirby built over at DC.

Starlin: It didn't start out to be that way. Kirby was a great influence on me. Originally Thanos was a very skinny, dark-looking character. If he looked like anybody, he looked more like Metron from the Fourth World series. I'm not exactly sure what prompted us to make him more monsterous looking. I know that Roy wanted to show DC that we could do their Kirby character better than DC could. He was the editor at that time. It may have ended up being somewhat like the Fourth World but I tried to get it away from that as we went along.

CF: I don't think I'd want to be a fairly new artist trying to do Kirby better than Kirby.

Starlin: Well, I didn't like the idea.

CF: After you were doing Captain Marvel, Warlock and Master Kung Fu for a while, you broke from Marvel...

Starlin: I had disaggreements with Marvel several times along the line. I've probably quit Marvel about six different times. I'm not what you'd call a company man. I've worked for just about everybody at one time or another: DC, Warren, Marvel, Eclipse. I'm doing a little bit of work for Pacific right now. About the only folks I haven't worked for yet is First Comics.

CF: Someone should remind them.

Starlin: I don't know where I'd get time time for anything for them right now anyhow.

CF: What lead to the conflict with Marvel?

Starlin: It was a lot of business things. Some were misunderstandings.

CF: Was it more misunderstandings or disagreements over control of how you were drawing the comics?

Starlin: My disagreements over editorial control — some of them were bargains that I felt hadn't been lived up to on Marvel's side. There was quite a bit of confusion during that time. We'd have a new editor every two months it seemed. Some editors were better than others. Because of all the confusion, a lot of bad spirits and bad times came out, which has all been run through by other people in other interviews. I'm not even going to get into that at this point.

CF: At that time didn't you have a certain amount of friction with Jim Shooter?

Starlin: Yeah, as a matter of fact Jim and I started off as blood enemies it seemed like. He was working for Gerry Conway as an assistant editor.

There was a mix-up on some artwork being changed. At this point I realize that Jim sort of got himself caught in the middle of it having to defend his assistant-assistant-editors. We started off on bad terms. For the first time, I think immediately after talking to him I quite Marvel again. Since that

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THE PRINCE SOON FOUND HIMSELF OUTSIDE THE DOMICILE OF XIOM-TARR, HIS GUIDE IN THE WAYS OF DARK ENLIGHTENMENT.
SAY NOTHING. I ALREADY KNOW YOU COME TO ME FOR THE MIGHT TO SHATTER YOUR FATHER'S ENEMIES.
SORROWFULLY, I MUST TELL YOU I CANNOT GRANT YOU SUCH POWER..
I KNOW OF ONLY ONE BEING WHO CAN.
MAY THE STARS PROTECT YOU... THE DARK NAMELESS ONE ALONE CAN AID YOU NOW.
SO IT PASSED THAT TWO NIGHTS LATER, DARKLON STOOD BEFORE THE ENTRANCE OF THE DREAD CAVERN OF THE SCREAMING SKULL, THE TEMPLE OF THE DARK NAMELESS ONE.
THE NAMELESS ONE, WHOSE WORSHIP HAD BEEN BANNED ON NEBULARIA FOR CENTURIES BECAUSE OF THE GODS' BLACK NATURE AND DEMANDS.
NAMELESS ONE, HEAR ME!
DARKLON OF NEBULOR, WOULD SPEAK WITH YOU.
WILL YOU GRANT ME AN AUDIENCE?
THE NAMELESS ONE'S REPLY WAS SWIFT AND...

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time Jim and I have worked together. We worked together on the graphic novel contracts and the Epic comic line contracts. Jim and I get along quite well at this point. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the man. He's done a lot of good things for the business in his capacity as Editor-In-Chief of Marvel.

CF: What specifically do you think he's accomplished?

Starlin: He's gotten the rates up — someone told me the other day that rates have gone up over 200% over the last ten years. He was able to start the graphic novel concept with the royalties added to it.

CF: How did that come about? How was a company convienced to change from a policy that for years had just paid piece work?

Starlin: With the work-for-hire concept that was being promoted in — I believe it was a 1979 copyright law change, work-for-hire became their bread and butter. There was a guild at the time which tried unsuccessfully to fight the advent of work-for-hire in the comics. A lot of people left the industry at this time because of this concept that the companies own everything. Jim knows the business. He realized that a lot of the talent that was the best was gone, or going or would soon disappear from the scene because of this. There were new publications coming out. Eclipse was out at the time and siphoning off some talent. Even at this point, Eclipse didn't have much of a royalty basis or anything like that themselves. There was a 2% royalty you got off the book after a certain amount of copies were sold. What Eclipse did have going for it, and before that Star Reach had, was the fact that they would grant you your copyrights. Jim wanted to produce a better kind of package, something similar to the European albums, the graphic novels. He realized that for that kind of package you need the best people working on it. We talked about it. We used to play volleyball out at Central Park quite a bit. When I was working for Marvel there was a Marvel team playing volleyball and I'd go out and play volleyball with them. We started talking about this at that point. It finally lead to the point where he said, "Why don't you start working with me on this contract to see if we can get this thing done? He directed. I did a lot of the work on the actual contract.

CF: Did you have to go back and study law at that point?

Starlin: Well, I had to find out everything I could on copyright law and contract law. I went to a lawyer on it a few times at the beginning. I realized that as far as publishing went I knew so much more than the lawyer did. So, with some suggestions from him and some other books that I picked up along the way, I learned as much as AJ could so I could write up a contract, or work with Marvel writing up a contract that would be acceptable for this kind of deal. It was kind of a hectic year and a half. I'm surprised I didn't end up with an ulcer out of it. Cadence would send me a contract, I would look it over, change things, send it back. They would approve the changes but make additional changes of their own which screwed up the contract again. We went back and forth like this for about ten different times before we got it right.

CF: What seemed to be the worst sticking points with Cadence?

Starlin: A lot of it was the lawyer who was working there at the time. She thought her job was to get as much for Marvel as she could. She would write things in one paragraph that would agree with what we wanted and then another paragraph would take it back. They were very convoluted pieces of legal paperwork at that point.

CF: What did they seem least agreeable to relinquish? The ownership?

Starlin: There were several contracts that had things in there – they were hidden in language – that said they never had to pay us a cent. I'd take it to Shooter and he'd say, "Is that what it really says?" He'd look at it and he'd say, "That's what it

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says." He'd send it back to them and say, "Change this." Jim was having a terrible time with it because all the executives are over in New Jersey and he's in New York. He wasn't an officer of the company at that time and so he was part of the working classes himself. They would either listen to him or not listen to him. Fortunately, we got Mike Hobson in there at the end, who was a Vice President and who they listened to as an equal. Mike is terrific at dealing with people. He was able to get us over the final hump, thank God.

CF: He spoke their language.

Starlin: Exactly.

CF: The first Marvel graphic novel utilized an existing Marvel property.

Starlin: That wasn't the plan originally. Originally Dreadstar was supposed to be the first one. Somewhere along the lines they decided they wanted a Marvel character to lead it off. Orignally Captain Marvel was supposed to be the third graphic novel. We had Elric and Dreadstar both in house before Captain Marvel was even started. For a while it looked like Captain Marvel was never going to get there because, no sooner than I started pencilling it I dislocated my finger. A good deal of the pencils on that job were done with a splint on my finger. Even after I got the splint off I found I couldn't ink properly so the entire job was inked with felt tips rather than with pen. It was somewhat of a jinxed project. It's fortunate that it came off and worked out as well as it did.

CF: It sold very well I understand.

Starlin: Three printings.

CF: Hasn't DC looked at Marvel and realized that they are going to be somewhat affected?

Starlin: DC has always been sort of slow about getting into new concepts. They never hit on to the **Heavy Metal/Epic Illustrated** kind of series. There's talk over there now of doing graphic novels and from what I understand Miller has worked out some kind of deal with continuous characters being copyrighted, owned by the author. From what I gather it's not nearly as good a deal as the Marvel one, but they're slowly getting pulled into it.

CF: Are you aware of what the differences are between the DC and the Marvel deals?

Starlin: From what I understand — I may be wrong on this, but I don't think I am — the author can hold his copyright, the copyright notice is always in his name, but DC Comics has the rights to use it forever. I mena, the thing is in the author's name but DC has control of it completely.

CF: Does DC have to pay the author if they use it?

Starlin: I believe so. I don't know the specifics. On the Marvel deal there's a termination date. If Marvel doesn't do anything with the characters or the books or the merchandising during a certain amount of time, I can give them notice and within six months all the rights revert back to me and become mine again.

CF: What happens to the Marvel contract if they decide to use a different creator?

Starlin: Oh they can't. It's all written in the contract; it's got to be me.

CF: The graphic novels were evolutionary toward the Epic comics, were they not?

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Starlin: Yeah, we showed that we could sell new character. The graphic novel Dreadstar, sold respectably. At that point we decided to go on and talk about doing a regular series under this basis which the Epic line of comics eventually became. It only took us about three months to work out a contract on that one.

CF: I guess that was based on your graphic novel contract.

Starlin: Basically. We had to change books to magazines and then put in printing dates. There were a few little changes, but it wasn't much really.

CF: Another thing that has changed relationships is that DC started paying a royalty on copies over one hundred thousand. I guess that was fairly easy for them to afford to do. Then Marvel followed suit and certainly it's costing Marvel more, but I guess now it's an industry standard.

Starlin: As a matter of fact, Shooter had wanted to push that concept through earlier, but couldn't because of the Gerber suit that was going on. They didn't want to pay any kind of royalties on the books because it would look, at the time, like they were caving in to Gerber's suit. Fortunately, National did it first. In that case Marvel could say, "We're not caving into Gerber's suit. We were following National's example." The fact that National did it first on their regular comic books, Marvel was able to follow suit after that.

CF: Quite a lot has been changing in the industry. I guess a lot of the talent that had been leaving the comics will be returning.

Starlin: Well, we have Barry Smith doing work again, Bernie Wrightson's going to be doing an irregular back-up feature in Dreadstar with me.

CF: What will that be?

Starlin: It's called "Interstellar Toybox". All I can tell you about it at this point is that it begins in issue number six in **Dreadstar** and the hero of it is named Aldo Gortney and he's a genius in a bucket. We have other folks. We have Pacific Comics now coming up and Neal Adams is doing some work for them again.

CF: You mentioned before that you were doing some work for Pacific?

Starlin: I'm doing the covers for some reprints that they're doing of the Darklon series from over at Warren. I agreed to do the cover. The whole book is going to have my stuff in it so I might as well do the cover.

CF: They have a Wrightson volume and a couple of others I believe also. When they republish the material from Warren like that, do you receive any royalty from that?

Starlin: No, the Warren stuff was work-for-hire. I don't believe there's any royalty involvement in this one at all. They're just printing it up.

CF: You mentioned before that there was a story involved in the whole death of the marvel universe, big bang/little bang rumor that hit. Can we touch on that?

Starlin: Oh yes. The "Jim Shooter is going to waste the entire Marvel Universe" thing.

CF: Exactly.

Starlin: That was a story that I happened to be there in the beginning of, when the whole mess started. It was a case of Jim Shooter, myself, Tom DeFalco, and Mark Gruenwald. We went out for a drink after work and as comic writers and artists tend to do, after we had a few drinks in us we began speculating on what could be done with what. There was talk of Captain America being replaced and Tony Stark and Iron Man. It was all just speculation. There was no fact to it. As a matter of fact, the people who picked up the rumor didn't even get the entire story. At one point it was suggested that the entire Marvel Universe be destroyed and the next month all the books start off again with new origins at issue number one. Jim at one point said that, seeing that I'm the master of death according to the fanzines, that I should do the last five pages of every issue of the books with the same conclusion: the entire universe being blown up and everything starting over from new. It was all just talk. I don't know who got the story to who, but nothing was ever going to be done with it, but it was reported as a fact.

CF: How did it get to Doug Moench who was the person who brought it to the press?

Starlin: I have no idea. Obviously somebody at the table mentioned it to somebody else who mentioned it to somebody else who mentioned it to Doug Moench who took it as fact, if Doug is the source of this. I don't know about that at this point.

CF: He's quoted as being the source.

Starlin: Oh, is he? Well Doug had just quit Marvel at that point and had a lot of sour grapes going through his system so maybe he was the source. I don't know.

CF: Another thing that Doug laid at the feet of Jim Shooter is what became of Gene Day, practically to the point of accusing Jim of his death.

Starlin: Well I did read that article in the **Comics Scene** that Doug wrote and the follow-up article in the back. Blaming Jim for Gene Day's death is ridiculous. I met Gene up at Marvel about the time I was doing the **Death of Captain Marvel** book. I was sitting there coloring some covers that were never used on the book. He was in from Canada and was working on a **Master of Kung Fu** story at the time in there, in the same office space that I was using. We were together for about six hours. During that time I'm sure he smoked at least half a pack of cigarettes, downed about four or five cups of coffee. Gene killed himself. Gene was obviously doing terrible things to his body. He would have probably died if he'd been working or not working, if he'd had trouble with Shooter or didn't. The man was a walking coronary waiting to happen. It's ridiculous to lay the blame on Jim. If it hadn't been for the timing, Gene probably would have walked up some stairs and had a coronary anyhow, whether he had any anxiety or not.

CF: According to Doug, Gene had been yanked off **Master of Kung Fu** by Shooter and thrown out of Marvel and was going over to DC.

Starlin: That's not true. Gene and Doug were told that there had to be some major changes in the book. The Kung Fu book wasn't selling. It was a terrible selling book. It was Shooter's job as Editor-In-Chief to see if he could jazz up sales on it. Doug and Gene decided that they didn't want to make

IN THE FORM OF A TRIO OF CRIMSON-EYED DEMONS THIRSTING FOR THE PRINCE'S BLOOD.
DARKLON HAD CURSED AND SUFFERED THROUGH THE MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTIONS HIS FATHER FORCED UPON HIM AS A YOUTH.
NOW HE BLESSED THEM AND PROVED THOSE LESSONS NOT WASTED.
THE BATTLE WAS SHORT.
SECONDS AFTER IT STARTED, DARKLON PEERED DOWN UPON THE TRAIL OF LIFELESS DEMONS HE HAD CREATED.
THE ABSENCE OF NEW ASSAILANTS HE TOOK TO BE AN INDICATION THAT HIS AUDIENCE HAD BEEN GRANTED.
SO HE ENTERED THE VILE DOMAIN OF THE DARK NAMELESS ONE.

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IT WAS THAT WAY BACK ON MY HOMEWORLD, BYFREXIA, IN THE MILKY WAY GALAXY.
PERHAPS ALL PLANETS IN THE UNIVERSE ARE SO CURSED. I DON'T KNOW.
I REMEMBER THOLD BACK ON BYFREXIA.
AND I REMEMBER THE SOUND OF THE SNOW BEARS.
THE SOUND OF THE HUNGRY SNOW BEARS...
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the changes in the characters that had to be done. They quit the book. Gene was doing work on **Star Wars**. He was going to be taking over—actually did in fact do some of the Indiana Jones stuff. He had never been fired. He always had work to do. I know that Jim had some arguments with him on Gene's layout style, but it wasn't anything like Gene was going to find himself in the bread line. Doug on the other hand, just decided that he was going to quit Marvel completely and called up National and got work over there before he quit Marvel. He decided that this was the time for him to leave. He decided that this was the time to trash Shooter. There seems to be a lot of that going around.

CF: Yes, a lot of people have tried to trash Shooter lately: Roy Thomas and Rick Marshal and quite a variety of people.

Starlin: I don't know much about Rick and Roy's problem with it. Mostly what I've seen is everyone taking shots at Jim inside the fanzines like the **Comic Journal** last year with their horrible drawing of Shooter in the Napoleonic pose. It was really a horrible caricature. They blamed him for just about everything in the world imaginable. All the wrongs in the comic book industry have been laid at his feet at this point. In truth the man has been good for the industry. He's done a lot of good things. He's an easy target though. He's six foot and he looks menacing. It's so easy to take shots at him because he doesn't fight back. He doesn't figure it's necessary.

CF: I guess he feels his work speaks for itself.

Starlin: In most cases it does. If you sat there and examined the record...

CF: But most people just read the articles rather than examining his record.

Starlin: That brings up a point which I've been wanting to talk about. The fanzines now—I'm not sure they realize just how much they reach out and do affect this business. They represent themselves as journalists. In most cases most of the fanzines I've seen have attempted certain journalistic standards in their work. There have been some notable exceptions over the last year-and-a-half or two years that I find very disturbing. There have been a number of instances that I'm aware of or that I have been involved in myself in which the integrity of certain fanzine publishing companies has been less than honorable. Just to run off a few examples. When we were doing the Epic Comic Line contract, we still had about a month's work to do on the contract, nothing had been settled, nothing had been signed, and a certain fanzine reporter wrote out a story saying that the contracts had been completed. She listed off what my rates supposedly were. Then she said it was about time that Marvel got forced into doing this, this was the way that it was supposed to be all along. At that time nothing was signed. I immediately got a lot of fleck saying, "Hey what's this story?What's this all about?" This story nearly screwed up the entire deal. When i questioned the reporter, I called her up, she wouldn't tell me, which I can understand—protecting sources—who the story came from. At the same time, when I asked her why she didn't confirm the thing, she said she didn't have my phone number to confirm it. I asked her why she didn't call Marvel. She gave me some "hem-and haw" that they might have denied it or something. She never even bothered to check.

CF: Couldn't Marvel have put her in touch with you?

Starlin: They could have. All she would have had to do was ask for me. They wouldn't have given her the number, but she could have had them call me and I could have confirmed or denied the story. Even Bernstein and Woodward during the Watergate crisis—when they got a story, they called up the White House to give them a chance to confirm or deny. That's all I'd like to have happen myself. I would like to have the same

privilege as the Watergate conspirators had. It's not only this incident, but there have been a number of other things that have come up that I find very disturbing about the ethics of the fanzine business in certain cases. There's one fanzine out there that also happens to be in the direct sales comic book publishing business. From what I've been able to see, I've never yet seen a positive review about a direct sales comic book or magazine or novel from a competitor from this fanzine. At the same time, anything that they've printed gets glowing reviews and in some cases is reviewed in two different issues. There have also been instances of other artists and writers that I've talked to that have cast a very ominous shadow on the ethics of the publishers. Frank Miller tells me that in an interview he did for a certain fanzine, he said several nice things about Jim Shooter and his working relationship with Shooter. When the interview came out, he found that everything he said about Shooter, had been edited from the script because the fanzine itself had it in for Shooter. There was another incident when Bill Sienkiewicz was asked for an interview and some drawings for their fanzine. He declined the interview because he said, "Well you guys have trashed me in several reviews before." The editor at this point said, "If we give you a couple of good reviews, will you do the interview with us?" That doesn't strike me as very ethical. There was a time reported in an editorial that this particular editor had wandered into a convention in San Diego and was horrified to find that Mike Grell and myself were giving drawing lessons to kids who wanted to become comic book artist. The panel that he walked into in reality was a panel discussion about fine arts in comics. This editor forgot to mention that Leonard Starr and Will Eisner were also on the panel with us. Just two minor discreptinces in the story but you can see what a difference it makes. There have been some occassions in the last year or so that have made me question the honesty and integrity of certain fanzines. People in this business do read these publications. If they don't read they hear about them. What they print is a fact of the business and they can affect decisions from what they put down or affect working relationships. It takes a while for the truth of these things to circulate around if it's an erroneous article. The lie lasts longer than it should. It takes a while sometimes for the truth to come back out.

CF: Can what a publication comes out with affect the career or income of a creator?

Starlin: Well, in my case where it reported the contract being completed, and that I had forced Marvel into doing this, (in which case if Shooter and Hobson were not the level headed people they were) they could have said, "What do you mean we've been forced into it? Go hit the road." In which case my income would have gone right out the window. Yes, they can affect it.

CF: That's dangerous. That's power without control.

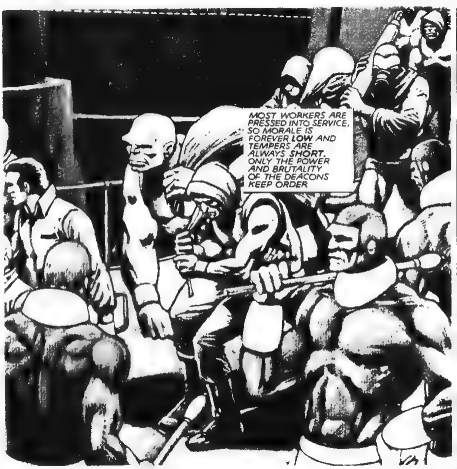
Starlin: The word is a powerful weapon, expecially if it's in the hands of irresponsible people.

CF: What would you suggest that publications do?

Starlin: Call up and confirm their stories. Not take one source as the Bible. See if they can confirm a story from at least two or three sources.

CF: We have a policy of doing that, such as when the whole concept of the death of the Marvel Universe came out. We talked to all the editors and all the writers. However, when the story finally came out, we found that we had been scooped by everyone else. That's not good for sales. It's very difficult to be in that situation, and I don't think the professionals seem to react that negatively. I mean they don't place a stigma on you if you use bad journalism or try to help you out if you use good journalism

Starlin: I don't think that's exactly true. I know one fanzine in particular that through the general working population of comics is looked down upon as being a sensational rumor-


MOST WORKERS ARE PRESSED INTO SERVICE, SO MORALE IS FOREVER LOW AND TEMPERS ARE ALWAYS SHORT. ONLY THE POWER AND BRUTALITY OF THE DEACONS KEEP ORDER

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YET RECENT EVENTS HAVE FORCED ME TO RETURN.
OF LATE I HAVE BEEN PLAGUED BY ASSASSINS.
ASSASSINS ALLEGEDLY HIRED BY KAVAR DARKHOLD, MY FATHER.
CAN THE YEARS HAVE CHANGED HIM, THAT HE'D BE CAPABLE OF SUCH ACTIONS?
I PRAY NOT.
"HE WAS THE KAVAR OF NEBULARIA, HIS WAS THE HAND THAT RULED THE THOUSAND PLANETS OF THE REALM. HE WAS THE ULTIMATE PRODUCT OF A DOZEN CENTURIES' EXPERIENCE IN TYRANNY AND WARFARE.
"DARKLON WAS THE SON OF WHICH THE KAVAR WAS ASHAMED.
"AS A WARRIOR BORN, DARKHOLD WAS CRUSHED WHEN HIS OFFSPRING FOUND MORE JOY IN BOOKS, MYSTICISM, WOMEN AND THE GENTLER PATHS OF LIFE, THAN IN THE MANLY ART OF WAR.
"THOUGH OF THE SAME BLOOD, NO TWO MEN COULD HAVE BEEN MORE DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE OTHER'S LIFESTYLE.

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monger. Most responsible working professionals have been avoiding this publication. At least this is the case with the folks I've talked to over at Marvel. I'm in contact with most of them.

CF: So you think this will begin to have an affect? In the past it hasn't.

Starlin: It may not. I think people have gotten a little angry at them. I know that at one point the **Comic Journal** ran a little bit on Steve Englehart. They inferred that he had sold out coming back to Marvel and doing work on the Epic Comics. I was infuriated with that because Steve's trouble with Marvel have always been fiencial. He wanted this contract and he finally got it. This was not the first incident. I quickly typed up a petition having them banned from the press conferences up at Marvel. I got about two pages of signatures on it in one day, but by the end of the day I had finally settled down and realized that all I'd be doing is making martyrs out of these characters by doing this so I ended up tossing the petition away. There is reaction to bad judgements in journalism, at least on the professional end. I mean, it's terrible to have something that's not true or something that's been slanted about you put into press, put into type. If someone was walking around, telling lies about you in public your friends and that, you'd have a word to say to them. You're sort of in a strange position when it's the printed word though. It becomes somewhat sacrosanct and it's a peculiar thing to deal with.

CF: Unfortunatley, people have a tendancy to believe what they read.

Starlin: That's true. You know, if it's printed it's true.

CF: Of course this isn't the only field that has had internal journalistic problems like that. Certainly the movie industry is notorious for that. Publications would run pieces on a movie star and they would contact their agent and tell them that if they did not want the piece run, they could always buy the advertising space. Then there are publications which make their living just generating strange rumors, such as the tabloids that are sold in the super-markets. Even the Washington Post and the New York Times have run completely falsified accounts. It's more widespread than just the comics reporting.

Starlin: I think the only one who is going to be able to control it is your industry yourself. The fanzines themselves setting up some sort of self regulatory panel or commision to censure a fanzine that gets out of line. That is really the only control that can be placed on it—self-control.

CF: I think there's an awful lot of professionals that are running around using the fanzines to sharpen an ax.

Starlin: I'm sure there's a lot of that, yes. There's too many professionals taking the opportunity to hatchet their fellow professionals.

CF: Granted, the fan press should not be giving them this opportunity, but there are a lot of professionals that, given the opportunity, are very anxious to use it. It reinforces things. One feeds on the other. And when it does, it almost seems to help sales.

Starlin: I guess there has always been that judgement between the matter of integrity and sales. It's something that you have to work out at your end.

CF: Going back to Dreadstar, you were discussing the long range aspects of Dreadstar and the annual and so forth.

Starlin: Yes, Dreadstar is now a continuous series. It's going on past issue six until either I burn out on it or it's sales drop so badly that its not worth printing. Right now it's doing quite well. We sold a hundred and fifty thousand on the first issue. Between issue six and seven, Dreadstar's first annual should appear. What it will be is actually a reprint of the **Price** book but it's done in color and printed in photo seperation on Baxter paper the same size as the regular Dreadstar series.

CF: But thicker.

Starlin: Another 12 pages thicker as a matter of fact.

CF: Previously that had only appeared

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BUT THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE ROCK IS NOT THEIR SOLE CONCERN.

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in black and white.

Starlin: Previously it only appeared in black and white and only had a print run of seventeen thousand. Dreadstar has caught on now. It should be more than worthwhile, especially with the color on it which is gorgeous. It should be more than worthwhile picking it up. Christy Shields and my wife Donna Grazlunds both did a lovely job of coloring it. As far as anything else new with it, we're going along with the story. I'm going to continue to do the whole job.

CF: It almost makes you think that Epic Comics should be called Eclipse Comics, what with Dreadstar and Coyote.

Starlin: It does get a little confusing.

CF: It's unusual that both of the titles are former Eclipse properties. A lot of the work you've done involves political and philosphical concepts. If you were going to put a political label on yourself, what would you call yourself?

Starlin: A realistic liberal. Most of my political awareness came in the late '60s. A lot of the things I believed in at that time, I still do, but a lot of them have been modified with a little bit of reality. I've got a very heavy belief in the work ethic. At the same time I realize that not everybody can do it and I realize that some people are going to need help from someone—if not the government then people. I'm annoyed by a number of things that Reagan does, but at the same time, some of the things he does do make sense to me. I find myself biting my tongue for thinking such. There are portions of his economic policy which I understand. The fact that he's balancing it all out on the backs of the poor still infuriates me.

CF: Is it the job of society to protect everyone and see that they have an income or should people be forced to earn their income unless they are physically disabled.?

Starlin: I believe they should have to earn their income if they are physcally capable of doing it. If they cannot, there should be some help. Also, it's the government's job not to make it so impossible to make a living. We just recently had this truckers' strike. There were some terrible things done during that time. There was a man murdered, there were shootings, there were trucks burned, but it was inexcusable that a government would put a group of it's people into a position where they were against the wall like they were. I cannot condone what they did, but I can understand their outrage and their horror at being put into a position where they can't make a living by the government that they voted into office.

CF: It's the same as what they did to the farmers several years ago when they banned the wheat exports.

Starlin: That's a little bit more complicated than this situation seemed to be. This seemed to be more a situation where this law has upped the cost to them astronomically where it's eating up all their profits.

CF: What the farm thing did a couple of years ago was to keep the Soviet Uniog from getting wheat, which they got anyway. They stuck the American farmer with wheat which he can no longer sell at a reasonable price. How much government is good for a country?

Starlin: That's a complicated question.

CF: That's the issue that Dreadstar is talking about—how much and what king of government?

Starlin: I think it comes down to, there should be enough government to keep you from being victimized terribly. But at the same time, what the government does is usually complicate a situation that is very forthright and straight with a lot of bureaucratic nonsense, which makes a very simple job that much more complicated. It's like the department of environmental protection granted this huge super fund, but because of the

way government set it up, it could not actually do anything. There was just this huge cumbersome agency which did a lot of paperwork, but had very few field agents. I don't think it's so much a matter of how much government, but rather the quality of government. I think in a lot of cases in our country, and in every country in the world, it sometimes seems like government's main objective is to create more of itself rather than solving problems.

CF: Isn't that the inherent problem in any institution?

Starlin: I believe that once you get more than three people together, it begins to be a problem, yes. I'm not exactly sure what the answer is. I can come up with a solution in a science fiction story. It's a little more complicated to get it done in real life.

CF: In Dreadstar you have some interesting governments. Are you going to be getting into how they affect their people internally?

Starlin: More so in the instrumentality than the Monarchy. The Monarchy is a pretty straight forward economic power. The Monarchy will eventually fall and the spotlight will mostly be on the instrumentality which will adapt the worst of both societies. I'm going to be doing things along the line of exploring what could happen in such a society. The instrumentality will be the heavy duty villain in this piece. It will just be a matter of time before it breaks down into one power. I don't know when that's going to happen, but somewhere in the next ten issues.

CF: The danger of theocracy seems to have run through a number of your creations.

Starlin: Well, I went to a parochial school. I shouldn't need to say anything more than that.

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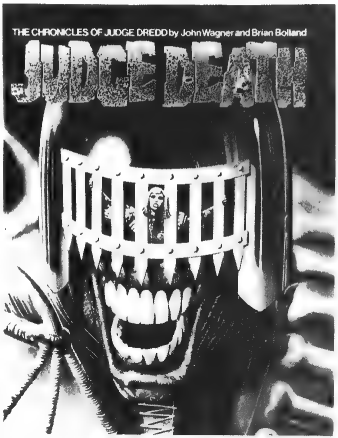
TITAN BOOKS



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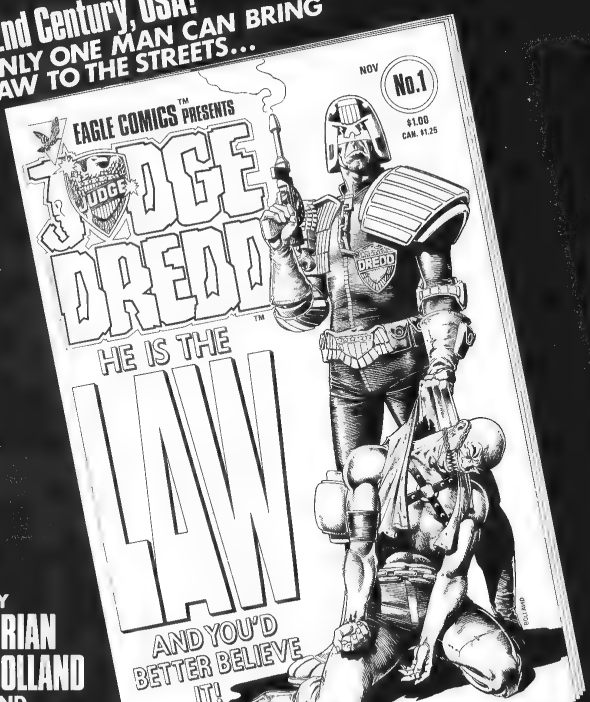

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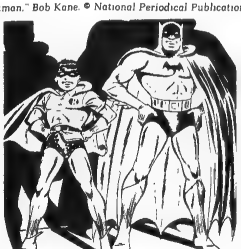
"Batman." Bob Kane. © National Periodical Publications.



I started looking at comics before I could read them. From the very first, they fascinated me. By the time I was able to actually READ them, I was completely hooked. Actually, I learned to read by reading comic books. I even must have read some of the very books which Dr. Wertham insists SHOULD have completely destroyed my morals and turned me into some sort of perverted degenerate.

Fact is, I can honestly state that not one single heinous atrocity I committed as a child, (and I'm sure there must have been a fair share of those) was ever motivated by anything I saw or read in a comic book. The comics were responsible for a great many of the POSITIVE aspects of whatever morality remained.

I found it not at all difficult to believe all the good things I was being taught in school about heroes like Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, etc., because I spent so many after-school hours with equally believable heroes like Superman, Batman, Captain Marvel, et al. Since MY heroes were expressing the same basic moral values being expressed by the SCHOOL'S heroes, I had no difficulty adopting many of those same moral thoughts for my own developing ethical code. In those days, each little individual part of the growth process seemed to work together like little parts to make a more realistic whole. The war may have had something to do with it, but I also think we were more involved with our heroes than we are today. I really hope we have not forgotten HOW to revere heroes.

My earliest comics were D.C.'s. That might have had something to do with the over-all quality I thought I saw there. Granted, many of the early D.C.'s left much to be desired. Compared to that other stuff that was avilable then, though, they were true works of art. That might account for my present-day prejudices.

Second [a **close** second, at that] on my list of favorite publishers was Fawcett. They had a lot of good second-string characters who frequently captivated me [especially Ibis, The Invincible]. However, the **big** draw at Fawcett was, of course, the Marvel Family. In spite of the lawsuit, by the way, I don't remember ever recognizing the slightest similarity between Superman and Captain Marvel. Superman was absolutely **serious** (with a very few exceptions). Captain Marvel was good clean fun [with NO exceptions]. Now, in the June of 1981 (#34) issue of **DC Comics Presents,** we finally are treated to "Voltaire meets Mighty Mouse." The word "ludicrous" has put on whole new worlds of meaning with this one. The only nice thing about the book was to see Hoppy, the Marvel Bunny again, after more than 30 years. Even HE whould have been ashamed of this one. By the way, the way Captain Marvel LOOKS nowdays, simply makes him a new character in an old name. Today there is a very obvious similarity between Superman and Captain Marvel. For my money, they have **both** been short-changed.

In spite of what I have said in the previous paragraph, I still have some very strong attachments to the entire Marvel Family – including Hoppy. I do, however, find myself constantly having to mentally forgive D.C. their dastardly treatment of ALL my old friends.

Third in line of preference was a toss-up. It had to be either Quality (Blackhawk and Plastic Man), or Dell.

Sure, the Barks Ducks were GREAT. Almost all the "Disney" stuff was pretty good in those days, and I read – and enjoyed – a great deal of it. HOWEVER!! For the most consistently gut-wrenching, rolling-on-the-floor, gales of laughter and giggles, absolute FUN-FUN-FUN there had NEVER been a comic book published [to my knowledge, anyway] that could begin to compare with **Little Lulu.** I haven't seen many of those lately, but I certainly remember the outrageous comedy they contained in my youth. I don't think any other comic book has ever made me laugh out-loud while reading it. **Little Lulu** almost always did.

The Quality heroes [almost forgot my favorite: Doll Man] were almost always done with very good writing but very dark coloring. They did not quite seem as bright and Doll Man was done so well that I never [until the DC revival, years later] realized what a stupid premise his "power" was based upon [the ability to change size by will-power].

Those were the ones I read regularly

"Captain Marvel, Jr.," Mac Raboy.
® National Periodical Publications.

when I was a kid. They were the ones I would eagerly trade for, even two-for-one. I was, however, very much aware of may of the "Brand-X" companies. Like Marvel / Timely / Atlas / Whatever - they - were - called. I used to read Captain America, The Human Torch, and Sub-Mariner once in a while. Captain America wasn't too bad (although nowhere NEAR as interesting as Superman and Captian Marvel). The other two were VERY disturbing to me. The Justice Society had no bickering. The Marvel Family had no bickering (even though everyone KNEW one of them was a fraud [Uncle Dudley]), The Blackhawks had no bickering (in THOSE days!!). The Timely heroes bickered. They even openly FOUGHT one-another!! In the midst of a medium that was busy teaching me moral disciplines, here were a bunch of undisciplined swine -- CALLED **HEROES**, for crying out loud!! They were the ones I would gladly traded two of for one battered issue containing heroes I thought of as my personal friends.

Stability was a MOST important part of our lives back then -- even in the midst of World War II. The heroes I cared about [**including** the ducks, mice, and bunnies -- and Little Lulu] were ALL **VERY** STABLE. Characterization may have been pretty shallow -- but it WAS consistent. Superman may have met some pretty weird challenges but he always met them with the same (predictable) basic personality. None of these people ever became strangers for an issue (like in **DC Comics Presents #34,** where **everyone** is a stranger). The bottom-line, rock-solid moral issues ALWAYS remained intact. And, dammit, that **WAS** relevant in that day and age!! Want an example? I remember a scene in which Captain Marvel is confronted (in another dimension or on another planet) by the ruler of an alien race. The aliens demand that Marvel kneel in homage to their king. After 30 years, I can still see, in my mind's eye, Captain Marvel, standing tall, saying, "I am an American. We do not bow to anyone!" I remember that one panel from that one comic [**thousands** have I read!] because it was especially relevant to my life at that time. I wonder if the relevance of the comics published today are creating the same length of memory in today's children. My trouble is, I can't believe ANY of our present media is producing that kind of memory. Maybe I'm wrong. Hope so.

While I was ashamed to read comics for a few years, I never quite lost my interest in them. I would still steal a sideways glance at the comic racks from time-to-time. When I stopped reading comics, the Marvel Family still existed, the Fantastic Four were a good ten years away, the JLA had not yet been invented, etc. When I returned to comics, the Fawcett heroes had vanished, Kirby was doing the Fourth World stuff, and O'Neil and Adams were doing Green Lantern. Also, anyone who was reading comics was reading Marvels (except me). I had managed to miss a lot of the 50's and all of the 60s. Comics racks over the years had not prepared me for what I found. It seemed as though I was discovering comics for the first time. Everything was different:

Clark Kent was a TV newscaster.

Green Lantern had a different uniform.

Flash had a different uniform.

There was a Kid Flash, Kid Aquaman, Kid Wonder Woman, etc., etc., etc.

Speedy was a doper. (MY GOD! WAS NOTHING SACRED?)

Green Arrow had a beard (and a VERY strange personality change).

Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane were heroes in their own right (**WHAT???**)

Batman and Robin were not together anymore (and were not in Wayne Manor, either).

There were two Earths (took me a long time to remember which was which).

The Justice Society was now the Justice League (with the wrong members, sort of).

The Atom was now Doll-Man (the old one couldn't shrink).

Comics now contained letters instead of those stupid text pages.

Ten cent comics now cost 25-60 cents.

Etc.

"Plastic Man," Jack Cole. © Comic Magazines.

"Doll Man," Reed Crandall. © Comic Magazines, Inc.

Until I could find the resources to research what had happened while I was gone, I was one pretty confused reader. Eventually, with the help of a lot of reference material, I was able to sort it all out – at least in the D.C. Universe.

Marvel was quite another matter. Although I now buy all the Marvels (as well as everything else published in this country), I still have not been able to figure out what is going on in the Marvel Universe. I do not feel "at home" with that crowd at all. Remember, when I was growing up, the Timely heroes did not impress me (except negatively). Now, in addition to trying to figure out what has gone on since the early '60s, I also have to overcome my childhood distaste for the whole mob. That does not seem to pose a problem for those who grew up on Marvels. I didn't. I grew up on D.C.'s. In spite of the continuity that Marvels are supposed to maintain, I can't yet find it. In spite of the discontinuity which D.C.'s HAVE maintained, I still feel a lot more at home with them – even in their new incarnations.

The **Marvel Indexes** have been of some help in trying to become aquainted with these strangers. I have, however, read **Fantastic Four #1** (and several issues thereafter) and can't quite get as excited as I think I am supposed to. On the other hand, I have also read **Action #1** and that wasn't all that great, either. All that reading was in reprint, of course – I'm not a wealthy man.

Now, if I could sit down and read every Marvel published since **Fantastic four #1**, I might be able to generate a bit more interest in the line. If any of you are interested in contributing to my cultural advancement, you may send contributions to the address on Page 1. They are NOT tax deductible.

"Little Lulu," Marge Henderson © Marge

COMICS AS AN ARTISTIC FORM

BY Peter Sanderson

Are comics art? Some people would say that every creative work can be called art, regardless of its quality or degree of success. If everything is art, though, then the very word "Art" loses any special meaning. When it is asked whether or not comics are art, the real question is whether or not comics have an intellectual depth that makes them more than trivial means of entertainment. It would take an entire essay, probably, to formulate a precise definition of what art is. Let us say for the purposes of this essay that art is whatever enriches one's perception and understanding of human nature, the world around him, and his purpose for existence. Pictorial imagery as well as the writing of fiction can fulfill these requirements. Comics combine words (or at least a narrative in the author's mind, in the case of wordless strips like **Napoleon**) with a sequence of pictures to create their effects. Ideally, both of these elements—words and pictures—should be on a decent level of artistic achievement for the end result of combining the two, the comic itself, to be a work of art. Obviously, not every creative work can succeed in fulfilling the requirements of art. This is true of all media in which art can be created: prose, the theatre, painting, sculpture, music and all the rest. The question this essay must then pose is not "Are comics art?" but "Can comics be art?" The answer is yes. Most comics are not works of art, but many most certainly are. To deny this fact is to blind oneself to the aesthetic and intellectual worth of a considerable body of work created over this century by such individuals as McCay, Herriman, Segar, Foster, Raymond, Gray, Gould, Caniff, Barks, Gottfredson, Eisner, Feiffer, Kelly, Kirby, Spiegelman, Englehart, Gerber, Wrightson, Kaluta, Windson-Smith, Starlin and others.

Students of the comics medium must be careful in determining what examples of comics are indeed art.

There is often an understandable tendency among aficionados of a medium of artistic expression to classify whatever they greatly love or admire in that medium as art. However, a work can have great entertainment value without necessarily fulfilling the functions of art I have already listed. There is a distinct difference between art and what I shall call craftmanship. Effective storytelling, striking compositions and well portrayed human figures on the part of the penciller and witty, concise dialogue and clever, tight plotting on the part of the writer make for an appealing, craftsmanlike comics story, but they do not elevate the story onto the level of art unless they expand the reader's awareness and understanding of himself and his world. To my mind, for example, a number of the DC books of the early and middle 1960s, such as **The Flash**, **Hawkman** and **Justice League**, are among the best plotted, and in may cases, most strikingly drawn comic books ever, but, among other factors, their failure to go beyond rudimentary characterization prevents them in most cases from achieving the level of art. Nevertheless, the history of comics is far richer for the existence of these masterfully crafted series. In arguing that comics can be art, I am by no means asserting that there cannot be comics that are "merely entertaining" works of craftsmanship.

Art cannot be judged in an intellectual vacuum. Too often comics readers overpraise a comics story which treats a subject in a manner which may well indeed be unusual and perceptive in comparison to its handling in may other comics, but is actually banal when compared to works on the same subject in other artistic media. To assess the artistic worth of comics, a critic should have extensive knowledge of art in other media. However, it is also wrong to let the greatness of certain works in other fields blind one to the lesser, but still real worth of some comics.

CATWOMAN CONSIDERED

Character © 1982 DC Comics

The Catwoman. The Princess of Plunder, the Mistress of Menace, the Empress of the Underworld, the Tigress Queen. A regal image she has, the first and arguably best of the great villainesses. Even the term Feline Felon is not really derogatory—all cats have an innate poise and dignity, and tend to give the impression that they can remember being worshipped in Ancient Egypt and think they still should be.

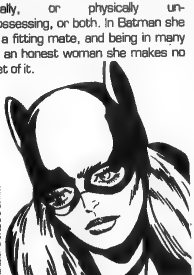
Selina Kyle was born in probably comfortable middle-class circumstances- she was the daughter of a pet shop owner who must also have been a cat-lover, since he taught his daughter all about these animals -rather than any other. I suspect that the need for excitement which was to characterize her later life was already present in the young girl—at any rate, when she left school she took a job as an air hostess, a profession with a glamorous image. Whether she was disappointed in the reality we don't know— because quite early in her career her plane crashed, she was hit on the head, and like most characters in comics who are hit on the head in such circumstances, she developed amnesia. Something also happened to her moral values, possibly because whatever her moral or religious background had been, she had forgotten it. She decided to become a criminal.

Achievement is achievement, even on the wrong side of the law, and Selina's was admirable. She was still a young girl, in her late teens or early twenties at the most; she had lost all memory of her past. All she had going for her was her very high intelligence, her perfect health and strength apart from the amnesia, and her beauty—although she didn't always use that. She became a jewel thief, preying on the very rich mostly. A very successful jewel thief, something of a legend in the underworld. She must, I think, have managed to salt away a very considerable amount of loot in the early part of her career. In later years she was able to set herself up, in the course of elaborate robbery schemes, as a magazine publisher, a high society hostess, a couturiere—all requiring solid financial backing. She was known as the Cat, later as the Catwoman.

And one day she disguised herself as an old woman and went on a cruise, with the intention of separating a wealthy woman from a priceless emerald necklace, and was unmasked by the Batman. There was an immediate and very strong attraction between them, and they both recognized it. Catwoman shows none of the fear that most criminals exhibit at the sight of Batman. She is not, and she never will be, at all afraid of him. It is of course difficult to be afraid of a man who, she senses, desires her. "Well" she snaps at him when she stands revealed, the old woman disguise shed, "what's the matter? Have you never seen a pretty girl before?" He must have been staring at her, mesmerised by those green eyes. He is fascinated. So much so that, for the first time in his life, he compromises his principles. He deliberately gives her a chance at escape which she promptly takes. "Lovely girl!" he murmurs to a not particularly sympathetic Robin. "What eyes! Say—must'n't forget I've got a girl named Julie. Oh well—she still had lovely eyes!" To all intents and purposes he **has** forgotten Julie Madison—their relationship, never very profound, is to peter out not long afterwards. And already he wants to meet the Catwoman again—he has let her go so that he can pursue her again—and he is to do it twice more before she serves her first spell in prison. On both of the occasions she literally slips from his grasp—having kissed him goodbye before making her escape bid. He remains fascinated; he is able to penetrate her disguises (with one notable exception which we will

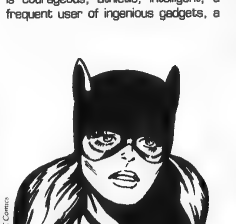
come to later), and even identify her (disguised) voice on the telephone ("That voice—I could never forget it!")

The Catwoman is equally fascinated. Within minutes of meeting Batman she frankly offers herself to him, with a suggestion that he come over to the side of crime. "Your proposition tempts me", he admits. It doesn't, of course; he isn't at all tempted by the thought of a career in crime. But **she** tempts him sorely. And sensing this, she renews the offer whenever they meet. Of the two, her motives are easier to understand. Most of the men with whom she associates are much inferior to her mentally, or physically unprepossessing, or both. In Batman she sees a fitting mate, and being in many ways an honest woman she makes no secret of it.



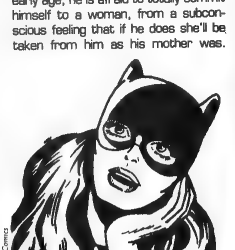
And Batman? His motivations are more complex. There is, of course, simple physical attraction. The Catwoman is beautiful, with her raven hair and those fascinating green eyes and her superb body. Even for Bruce Wayne, who has seen many lovely women, her beauty is striking. At one point in her career the Catwoman enters a beauty contest open to every young woman in Gotham City. She needs to win it in order to complete a jewel-smuggling job, so she makes elaborate arrangements to dispose of the other three finalists in the final round. But she makes no arrangements about getting into the last four, correctly assuming that her own looks will do that for her. She is, therefore, one of the most beautiful women in that very large city. Add to this that her costume enhances her allure. She is one of the few superheroines or supervillainesses to wear a dress, and one with fairly long skirts—but these enhance rather than hide the shape of her legs. And then she carries a whip, of course—and uses it with skill. The erotic implications are obvious, especially when you consider the way she and Batman frequently tie each other up.

But in many other ways the Catwoman is a fit mate for the Batman. Indeed, in many ways she is like him. She is courageous, athletic, intelligent, a frequent user of ingenious gadgets, a



mistress of disguise, and although legend of her nine lives was deliberately manufactured by herself to increase her prestige, she is still pretty good at getting out of death-traps. And of course she is apparently able to do what has baffled most other humans, and what Batman himself probably can't do—train the domestic cat effectively. And she in not without principles. She has never been involved with the sort of crimes that hurt ordinary, poor people. The rich are her prey. And she is as determinedly opposed to murder as Batman himself—the fact that she has on several occasions stopped henchmen of hers from harming Batman is irrelevent, of course, since she loves Batman, but her facing up to the Joker in defense of Robin's life is not. She has even been employed by a gang boss who feared incurring a murder charge but could not think of means of robbing without risking lives. He knew that she could, and had, used her superior wits to plan crimes that did not incur that danger.

But the main reason for Batman's attraction to the Catwoman lies in the fact that she **is** a villainess. Because of the traumatic loss of his mother at an early age, he is afraid to totally commit himself to a woman, from a subconscious feeling that if he does she'll be taken from him as his mother was.

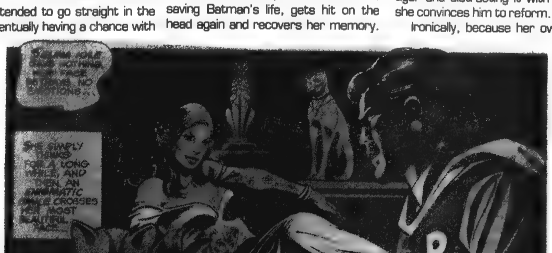


[What happened to his Earth-II counterpart, who did marry the Catwoman, can only have reinforced these feelings.] With Catwoman, in every other way so suitable, it is safe for him to admit to himself that he wants her, for while she remains a villainess there can be no future for them, no commitment, no possibility that some night a

hoodlum will shoot her down. And the result of this is that whatever he says, and no doubt sincerely believes on the surface of his mind, he doesn't really want her to reform.

She has made what seem to be sincere attempts to reform—and one way or another Batman has managed to muck them up. While still amnesiac she became attracted to Bruce Wayne, no doubt subconsciously perceiving his likeness to Batman. She confided this to Batman himself, and told him she intended to go straight in the hope of eventually having a chance with Wayne. She was at the time disguised as a beautician named Eva Berr? for the purposes of making face molds of wealthy clients and making masks from them which could be used to disguise herself and enter their homes to rob, and Bruce Wayne promptly began to court "Eva" and even became engaged to her. But hearing from one of her gang that he really loves Linda Page, his girlfriend at the time, Catwoman becomes suspicious. She disguises herself as Linda and confronts Bruce. He fails to penetrate the disguise—the first and only time he does not detect the Catwoman whatever she looks like outwardly. On a conscious level it shows how little Linda must mean to him, since if he loved her he would hardly be deceived by an imposter. Subconsciously—maybe he has recognised her, but doesn't want to admit it to himself. Wayne, the suave playboy, stammers out an explanation that he is doing a favour for Batman, and his engagement won't be for long. Quite justifiably furious with Batman rather than Wayne, the Catwoman returns to crime with a vengeance.

The Catwoman, in the course of saving Batman's life, gets hit on the head again and recovers her memory.



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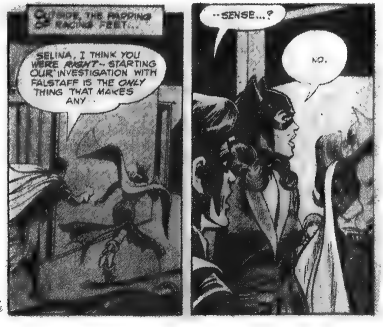
She is at first genuinely horrified at her career as Catwoman, but is persuaded to continue for a while as a police undercover agent. She works well and efficiently, and because of this and her amnesia is given a pardon. Batman even suggests the law might need her services again.

But he doesn't follow this up. It is a crime that calls for the Catwomen's services. When the "Whale" Morton gang tries to incriminate her by carrying out cat crimes, Batman is remarkably ready to believe that she has relapsed, perhaps because his secret wish is that she would. She takes the field to trap Morton, and ultimately succeeds. Similarly, during another rash of cat-crimes perpetrated by one "King of the Cats" he is jealously quick to impute her hesitation to help in apprehending the King—you may notice the one time he does ask for help there is a strong cat motif present—to her having fallen in love with the other cat person. Actually, it's her brother Karl; and ironically after saving his life [and Batman's by jumping into a cage with a live tiger and distracting it with her cape] she convinces him to reform.

Ironically, because her own relapse follows. Her pride is stung by a series of newspaper articles on her defeats by Batman [nothing apparently about her subsequent heroic work, which makes one wonder how much publicity it got], and she returns to crime. Or could it be she's noticed Batman was much less interested in her since her reform? Or that, as he perceptively remarks, she misses the excitement? Commissioner Gordon refers in the story, to "the way you tried to get her to go straight", and Batman himself moans "I've done everything to keep her from crime."

Oh yeah? Let's consider, from the start of their relationship, just what he has, and hasn't done.


OUTSIDE, THE PADDING OF RACING FEET...
SELINA, I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT- STARTING OUR INVESTIGATION WITH FALSTAFF IS THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES ANY
...SENSE...?
NO.
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She has several times, in the early part of the relationship, tried to seduce him into joining her in crime. They are both aware of their attraction—he **could** have tried a reverse approach and tried to coax her into going straight. It might well have worked.

The "Eve Barr" affair: Batman certainly demonstrates something less than his usual keen intelligence throughout that. In fact, if he'd left well alone, left it to her to prove she did mean to reform and find her own way of meeting Bruce Wayne, she might well have quit crime then. His meddling in fact made sure she wouldn't.

After her recovery from amnesia she functioned effectively as a superheroine three times, albeit having to work undercover. Batman the great reformer was, on two of these occasions, eager to believe the worst of her. He accurately perceives [they are rather alike, after all] that she feels a lack of excitement in her life. He doesn't think of the simple answer of suggesting that she in for being a superheroine. This cannot be excused as misguided protectiveness—he knows damn well just how capable she is. She who would give him a fight can tackle almost any other foe.

All in all—he doesn't want her to reform. Oh, his intentions are of the best; consciously he may. But his subconscious makes him rather try to push her into being the Catwoman. The villainess.

So matters stood until recently. What motivated her latest reformation? Is it a reformation? And why did she turn to Bruce Wayne for hlep? To take the last first—she has been attracted to Bruce before, and she blamed Batman, not him, for that fiasco. But a strong possibility exists that she knows he is Batman. She could have guessed, or deduced it, or instinctively known. Then there was the occasion during an adventure with Batgirl when she actually unmasked Batman. Batgirl had, however, smeared the upper half of his face with paint [without looking herself, God knows how], and we are asked to believe this deceived Catwoman. Even if it did, he was unconscious for quite some time. Long enough that she could have done her old beauty parlour routine on him, and produced a Bruce Wayne mask.

Has she really reformed? For a time, I toyed with a theory that she had developed a mental block like the Riddler, in her case caused by her failure to seduce Batman. She can't commit crimes unless she seduces Batman first. Sheknows he's Bruce Wayne, see above, so she decided that seducing Bruce would do. Only when she had, it didn't work—seems he has to have his cape and cowl on. [No, nothing else. Just his cape and cowl.] But on more sober relection, I think she is genuinely trying to go straight. Why? Perhaps her encounter with the Huntress, and the hints the Huntress let fall, gave her a notion of what her life could be, if she reformed.

The latest news, as I write, is that a new series of cat-crimes is to hit Gotham. Will have, by the time this sees print. "Whale" Morton back? Brother Karl with a relapse? Selina herself in a schizoid state? There are hints it may be the last. And if it is, who drove her to it? There is this fellow called Bruce Wayne, with a very unusal hobby, who is given to taking Selina to parties at airports where shipments of Egyptian **cat**-god relics are expected. Who gives fancy dress parties with collections of jewels on display [remember how she started out?], and encourages her to dress as **Cat**herine of Aragon. A simple suggestion that Anne Boleiyn would suit her colouring better [oddly enough, Spanish Catherine had red hair and blue eyes, English Anne's were black] would have sufficed. Who take her to the theatre—to see **"Cat** On A Hot Tin Roof" [he should have insisted they went to see "101 Dalmations" instead]. Who **still,** whatever he tells himself and the world, doesn't in his heart of hearts want his dearest enemy to be anything other than — the Catwoman.

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CF: According to my research you broke in with Harry Chesler. Is that right?

Kubert: Harry Chesler was one of the first places... His set up was the first place for which I worked, just about the same time I started high school.

CF: How old were you when you started?

Kubert: I think I was about 11. Actually it would not be fair to say that I started working there. The situation was I had just started at the High School of Music and Art. I resided in Brooklyn. My friend and I would make the rounds of all the publishers, once in a while taking a day off from school. One of the people we came across was Harry. Harry Chesler was a comic book packager. That is, he didn't publish the books himself. What he'd do is he'd have a staff—a stable if you will. I think Jerry Iger, Will Eisner's partner, had a similar thing. He had a stable or artist, and he would supply would-be publishers with complete books depending on what they wanted. So he had a dozen or fifteen cartoonists working up there—writers, letterers and so on. Amongst them were guys like Charlie Biro, Bob Wood, Charlie Welton, who is now a western painter, George Tuska was working there at that time, several others whose names don't come to mind. Anyhow, that was one of the places places we hit. We brought up some samples, showed them to Harry. Harry was kind enough to permit me to come up after school. School lasted to three o'clock or three thirty. Since I had to go though... his place was on 23rd Street; I had to go from 135th Street, which was where the School of Music and Art was, all the way

JOE KUBERT

down to Brooklyn, passing by there. He said, "Look kid, why don't you come up, stay a couple hours when you get out of school, stay until five thirty. You can do some work, watch the other guys work, and maybe you'll learn something." That's exactly what I did. In addition to that, he gave me five bucks a week just for expenses—to grab a bite to eat, for subway fare, which at that time was a nickel. He was extremely kind and extremely thoughtful. He extended himself in ways that most of the people I've met in this business have. That's the one experience which I've had in this business, which I've been in more than 45 years. I have yet to come across anybody who has turned his back, or who has not extended himself to help somebody who wants to start out. It's a wonderful part of this business. That was my experience with Harry. He allowed me to work on scripts that weren't slated for anything. I did find later on that when he sold his business, he sold everything, including those crappy little things I did. I vaguely recall having seen them somewhere, but I don't know what happened to them or where they went. The job up there was not so much a job but his permitting me to come up there and do some stuff and learn from the other guys.

CF: Were they pretty cooperative about critiquing your stuff?

Kubert: They were wonderful. The guys would—I'd be sitting there, I'd be petrified of course, and the guys would come over and very gently look at my stuff and they would suggest. They wouldn't tell me what to do, they'd say, How about this, kid?" or "How about that, kid?"They were terrific—very, very, helpful and, as I said before, extended themselves in every which way.

CF: When did you actually start doing work for the publishers?

Kubert: That was probably within a year of that time. I was probably around 12. I sold my first strip to a place called Holyoke Publishing. A guy by the name of Temerson was the editor. It was a little dinky office on 42nd Street above what used to be the flea circus. The first strip that I officially sold was called "Volton".

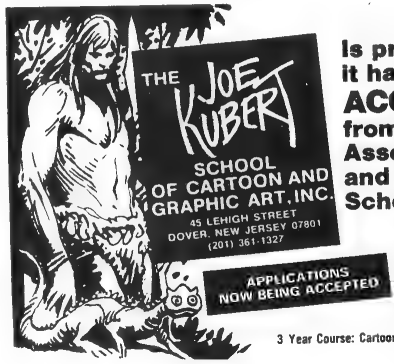
CF: Westhat a super-hero?

Kubert: Yes, that was a super-hero of a sort.

CF: What about Ragman?

Kubert: Ragman was one of the characters that Holyoke put out. They also put out Catman. **Catman Comics** was the magazine in which Volton appeared. I don't recall if I ever did Ragman. I remember very vividly and distinctly that I did this Volton strip.

CF: How did it feel to be in comics when you were so young?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Kubert: It was thrilling. I guess all of my life I've considered myself one of the most fortunate people in the world. I'm doing what I prefer to do more than anything else and people are willing to pay me for it. The excitement that is generated every time my stuff is published hasn't diminished. As a matter of fact, if anything, it's increased.

CF: You still get that thrill to have your name on the cover?

Kubert: Oh Yes! Oh Yes! The comic book artist isn't selling original work. Its only a process towards what everybody else sees. Its when its published that you really get the big kick. For many years, when I first started, I never figured that my work went beyond two blocks from where I was working. I figured that was as far as the stuff ever got and it became increasingly more thrilling to realize that it went to other states and other countries and eventually all over the world. It's a very large kick.

CF: Do you get much fan mail from other parts of the world?

Kubert: Yes I have, I don't want to describe the kind of fan mail I get as being hundreds of letters a week or anything, but I do and its a very rewarding kind of thing. You know, the **main** reason people like me do what I do—and I know you guys do too—is the intrinsic enjoyment—personal enjoyment—when somebody else enjoys your work. It's like icing on the cake.

CF: When did you go to work for MLJ?

Kubert: That was the very first place that I ever went up to; I was still attending Junior high school in Brooklyn, and one of the fellows who was my classmate had a relation, the same man that owned MLJ. I always used to draw pictures of musclemen, things like that, the young people draw when they're interested in comics. This friend of mine saw this work and said "Well, you know I've got an uncle or cousin (whichever the relationship was), why don't you bring the work up and show him?" Which is eventually what I did, I took my stuff up there and it was down on Canal Street in New York. It was there that I met people like Fred Kida and Irv Novick. Irv Novick gave me my first drawing lesson. He showed me how to draw a Nazi helmet at that time in 1939.

CF: You also did some work for Quality during the 40s. You worked on the Phantom Lady.

Kubert: That's right. I don't know where you got that. I forgot it completely.

CF: Did you ever work directly for Eisner when you were working for Quality?

Kubert: No, my relationship with Will started while I was in high school, when during the summer he gave me a job in the city while he was still working on the Spirit. At that time, I was sweeping up the place and erasing everybody else's work in preparation for it being published and he allowed me to work through the summer there. Soon after that Will was drafted into the Army. I never really, directly worked for him after that.

CF: You also started working for National in the early 40s. Who were your editors?

Kubert: My first editor was Sheldon Mayer who is one of the few people I feel I can still hang the appelation of genius on. He was an incredible guy. He created Squiggly and Sugar and Spike—a fantastic guy, a terrific cartoonist. He was my first editor.

CF: Surprisingly he never achieved a great fan following. He had a small but very loyal fan following.

Kubert: Sheldon Mayer's is a story that really should be told. I've never seen his entire background given. At one time, he was offered the editorial reins of this entire company.

CF: When was this?

Kubert: When Gaines was separate from DC.

CF: When he was writing for American?

Kubert: Actually that was called DC at that time. And that contained characters like the Flash and Hawkman and a whole slew of others. Those were the characters I was doing at that time. Carmine Infantino started at that time. Shortly after I was doing that stuff he came in—he and Frank Giacoia were working in the next office.

CF: So we're talking about what year?

Kubert: It's got to be about '41-'42, somewhere in that time. At that time they had the idea of amalgamating, when they had MC Gaines—when Max sold the place to DC. The offer was to Shelly to take over the editorial reins of this large company. He turned it down because he wanted to draw; to continue in his position as editor would negate the possibility of his drawing and he couldn't stand that. He was a fantastic guy.

CF: Which writers were you working with?

Kubert: Gardner Fox, Bob Kanigher was writing at that time. Julie Schwartz—I don't remember whether Julie was writing or editing. John Broome. Prominently, I remember Kanigher and Gardner Fox.

CF: Did you ever work with Otto Binder?

Kubert: Not that I recall. I might have, but not that I recall.

CF: I know that Binder was writing for Captain Marvel at that time.

Kubert: He was doing a lot of stuff for DC.

CF: What about the editors you were working for back then?

Kubert: Well as I said, the main editor I was involved with was Shelly Mayer. He was **the** Editor and the only editor. The other fellows that were around were assistants to assistants, and I never really dealt with that. Shelly was the one that I dealt with and I probably gave him more headaches than any three people you can imagine. I guess, when you're kind of young and kind of feeling your oats, there's very little anyone can tell you about what you want to do. I guess that was the case with Shelly and I guess I was also kind of abusive as far as deadlines were concerned. Which I don't think is the case with most people who are just starting out. The kind of rough time I gave him, I don't think I would have accepted myself.

CF: Well, you're an editor now. Would you put up with it?

Kubert: No. Absolutely not.

CF: So you would have fired yourself?

Kubert: Three times I would have.

CF: Did Morton Erskine have much of an impact on the way you were drawing at the time?

Kubert: Oh yes. Not at that time, but one of my first big jobs; my first opportunity was when I had the chance to ink Morton Erskin's work. That was the time he was doing Vigilante. I knew Mort—well I had met Mort when he was working up at MLJ, which, as I told you, was the first place I came up to. He was working on staff in a corner of the place there. Harry Shorten was the editor up there and a writer and I met him at that time.

But Mort was the guy who had graduated from MLJ and gone on to DC because at that time—and to a great extent now—DC was the Holy Land. That was the acme. That was the place to be. There were about 27 publishing houses. DC was the place to get into. When I made it and started inking Mort Erskin's work, it was a real climb up.

CF: Was DC such a Valhalla for cartoonists because they paid more or was it the prestige?

Kubert: Both. It was like working for the New York Daily News, which was a pretty good newspaper as oppsed to working for the **New York Times** which was a prestigeous place.

CF: Was there a wide variation of rates between what they were paying at the prestigeous houses compared to the other houses?

Kubert: DC was unquestionably paying the highest rates around. But also the fact that they had the best printing, the best color, the best writers. They had the best artists so that you were in excellent company when you were doing stuff for them. If a guy could get accepted into that fold—get to that level and be accepted on that level—he was doing pretty good.

CF: How was it organized in those days? Did you come in and put in a nine-to-five day on the board?

Kubert: It's pretty much a freelance business. The comic book business has been. Every once in a while you' find a bunch of guys who feel that they can work bette coming to somewhere other than their own homes t work. Most publishers who had the room would ac comodate those people by giving them a desk. Nic Mesman for a long time worked up in the office a Lexington Avenue. There are several other artists wh like to get out of the house to do their work. Like I said its a predominently freelance business. Stemming fron the fact that although there were 20 to 30 publishers most of them were hole-in-the-wall kind of places. A publisher could open up an office a quarter of the size o this room. He would hire a guy like Harry Chesler o Jerry Iger, have the book put together completely there get the whole package completely in and he's a publisher.

CF: I guess the freelance aspect of the business has stayed the same.

Kubert: It most assuredly has.

CF: What about production? The techniques, have the improved?

Kubert: No. I think there's been a deterioration. A deterioration due mainly to cost factor. There have been all kinds of ways sought out to replace the more expen sive materials. I think the major change really took place in the plates. Years ago, the plates were made out o metal. That's the reason you saw such sharp lines an people like Lou Fine's work, which was beautiful work fine line stuff. Every line came out. That's especially strange to hear because the stuff at that time was twice up. The original size of the pages was 13 x 18 opposed to the 10 x 15 size we use today. Regardless, every line would reproduce because of the kind of reproduction and plate-making that took place. But the plastic plate is used because of the cost. That's the reason that the stuff looks like that.

CF: So the plastic plates leak the color...

Kubert: That and the paper stock, the newsprint has deteriorated.

CF: Back than, were they actually engraving the plates or were they using a different process?

Kubert: Oh no, no. They were engraving , they were etched out with acide just the same way photographs are to a plate.

CF: Its an entirely different process now. What they do is photograph the artwork and use a gel on the plate.

Kubert: That's the plastic we're talking about now.

CF: No, they also do it with the metal.

Kubert: Oh really? I have not seen metal plates around anywhere. Especially in the comics.

CF: Comics were essentially printed the same way they printed the Sunday funnies. And that's why in the comics back then the color was so rich and the lines so sharp. Let's get away from that for a minute. I want to ask you about your artistic influences. Who are the biggies for you?

Kubert: That would be about everybody who started out about the same time I did. The three headliners are Caniff and Foster and Raymond. Those three were and still are. In all my years in the business I've not found anyone to replace them. The last one of them alive of course is Caniff.

CF: Were you influenced by any magazine illustrators from the turn of the century?

Kubert: Not that I recall. I watched them, studied Parrish and a lot of the other illustrators of the time. But I must admit I was much more involved in comics. What influenced me the most and turned me to the work I'm doing now was reading Tarzan as done by Foster. The drawing had the effect of making credible every line that he put down. I believed the character. I was able to take myself out of myself and actually be whereever this guy had the character and the action taking place.

CF: What about Hogarth's Tarzan? Did that heve an influence on you?

Kubert: Not really. Hogarth, of course, is an excellent artist, but there was a freshness, in Foster's work at that time. Even more so than the Prince Valiant that he did.

CF: Did you find that stiffer?

Kubert: No, I wouldn't say stiffer. If we could really categorize those things. Package them so it wouldn't generalize.

CF: More elegance?

Kubert: I think he was putting a greater effort into it. The comic book field was such a new thing to begin with when he first started.

CF: The Tarzan was really the first adventure after Wash Tubbs.

Kubert: I'm not really sure you know of the time sequence. But I know it was one of the first and so he was an illustrator to begin with as were most of the people who came into the business and he was applying himself on that level. I guess that's what it was.

CF: What about St. John's version of Tarzan? Were you aware of that at the time?

Kubert: Yes. That work had always disappointed me.

CF: Really?

Kubert: Yes, because it lacked the heroic credibility of Foster's work. I guess once I saw Foster's work...That was the work that enticed me into the comic book field. I guess that everything else was anti-climatic. None of it ever came up to what he did with that work.

CF: Would you say that you have a classic style?

Kubert: Oh yes. Definitely. I insist, when I speak to a lot of young people who want to be cartoonists, that this business of being talented, of being born with talent, is vastly overrated. With most of us, I think what happens is that we're born with an interest. We refine that interest by just spending a hell of a lot of time just drawing. But if you take a look at a Michelangelo or a DaVinci or a Rembrandt. If you look at a Rembrandt portrait as something that's been done four or five hundred years ago, and you look at that guy's eyes and that guy is still alive four or five hundred years later. That goes beyond what we term as talent. That's magic. Or if you've seen

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CF: The marble just looks like its alive.

Kubert: Its incredible. You take a close look at the feet and you could swear there are bones and veins and arteries under the marble. Its incredible. That's magic—that's really magic.

CF: How did you integrate that into your work? I know your bodies are very vigorous.

Kubert: Not consciously. I know that I...most of that stuff is very intuitive. Its how I feel. I know that some of my stuff is called very emotional material. I guess it is because I'll stretch and strain and pull and elongate and do anything I feel has to be done to communicate a particular emotion or a feeling that that particular character is doing or saying. I guess we're all influenced by things that we see and we incorporate them into the work. But I've never tried to mathematically put these things together or formulate them.

CF: Many of the new people who want to get into comics seem to have a very limited knowledge of art history or comic history. Do you think that's a handicap for them?

Kubert: I think so. I think that holds you back from learning how to draw. And that's the name of the game—learning how to draw. The big difference between cartoonists to me is, "Can the person draw or not?" When I first started, when I was 11 or 12, I was so taken with the line. It was incredible that a person could do that with a brush and pen I was so taken by the line that I failed to see the drawing and construction underneath that line. I think that is perhaps one of the faults that I find with some of the work around today.. That is that you see an illustration where every square inch is taken up with some rendering and it looks more like a tapestry than a form of communication, which is what a cartoonist is supposed to be doing. I find that basically not as effective as doing your job and telling the story as Eisner has hammered home all the time, "A cartoonist is a storyteller—he's a communicator."

CF: When you were doing your work back in the early days, were you very aware of Jack Kirby's work?

Kubert: Oh yes, everybody was. As a matter of fact, the most impressive work Jack Kirby did was work he inked himself. He was working for Timely when I first saw his stuff. He was working on something called The Vision. But this was one of the first things Jack had done, it was before he had hooked up with Joe Simon. It was very impressive work. I like his inking on his own work much more than when Joe did the stuff.

CF: Kirby was doing work for DC in the forties, too—Boy Commandos, Sandman.

Kubert: Right. He started out with Timely first though, then he went to DC.

CF: Did you know him in the old days?

Kubert: I inked some of his stuff.

CF: Really?

Kubert: I did a couple Boy Commandos.

CF: I didn't know that. What about Alex Toth? He broke into the business about that same time.

Kubert: Alex would be three, four years, maybe five years my junior. Alex started out...as a matter of a fact at one time we had a place on Park Avenue. I know that sounds very auspicious, but it isn't really. It was a skinny little brownstone stuck among all those big places. I and Carmine and Al Toth and a few other guys had a studio where we put our work together. Our relationship goes back a long time.

CF: Did you ever work together on anything?

Kubert: Yes. He did some work when I was publishing the Tor Book when I came out of the army. No, before I went into the army. Prior to 1950.

CF: Did you work for DC up until the time you went into the service?

Kubert: Yes.

CF: Just for DC or were you freelancing around?

Kubert: I was freelancing around. I always believed in not putting all my eggs in one basket. I believe that is a mistake when any freelance person puts himself in a position where he depends on one place to take all his work. Security for a freelance person is one job on the board and two waiting to be done.

CF: How do you think the business has changed since the old days?

Kubert: Oh impressively, impressively. We've taken giant strides as a matter of fact. When I started out back in the stone ages, when I sold a job I sold everything. Everyone figured, "Heck, if a guy paid you $5 for a page it was his." And everything that you did in it was his because that was the common practice. Today, that's changed remarkably. Here at DC, people who create their own work can capitalize on their creation through the merchandising, the royalties and so on. Guys like Adams have pushed for that and pushed very strenuously for it. They've gained accomplishments for themselves but not only for themselves but for everybody else in the industry. That's one of the changes. Another of the changes is that the stuff we were putting out was a more general genre than it is today. We sold a hell of a lot more magazines than we are today. Today its more a specific area that we're shoting for. There's more a fan group that we're shooting for today. In some ways, we strive to put together a higher level than was acceptable before. Before you would put out magazines figuring that somebody between the ages of 8 and 14 was reading them. That's what you were shooting for. If you made it too complicated you went beyond the audience that you were involved in. That isn't true today.

CF: Going back to what you were saying about the industry being more fan oriented now. What do you think of the preoccupation with costumed super-heroes. Do you think its a sign of a healthy industry?

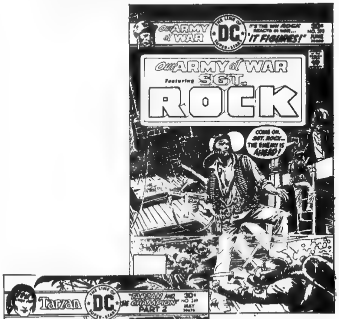
Kubert: Frankly, I think its just a trend and anybody that sinks everything that their doing into creating more costumed heroes is traveling a short-lived route. I think what we have to do and what we try to do here is figure out what the next step will be.

CF: What do you personally think it's going to be?

Kubert: I think its heading the way its been in Europe for about the last five to seven years and that is putting material together and not really taking into consideration too much what the subject matter is, but in the way its being handled. I'm a proponent of the fact that any subject matter can sell as long as it's done well.

CF: The genres that seem to have been lost are the romances and the westerns. Do you see them coming back?

Kubert: Oh yes, and I think that our western character, Jonah Hex, has survived despite the fact that its the only one. But I'm sure if somebody comes up with one or even if Ross Andru had one in mind and he did it as well



as he's doing this one—. Its not the subject matter but the handling of the subject manner.

CF: Joe, how has DC changed since you've been with them?

Kubert: In all the 45 years I've been in this business, I think its in a much healthier position and much more advantageous for the artist than its ever been. I think that the books are selling better than they have before. I think that the rates are incredibly higher than before. I'm speaking now in spite of all the inflation and all the other economic factors. There's more money being made by the average comic book artist than the average syndicate artist. The syndicate artist is really having a tough time. Continuity strips in syndication...forget it. They're just creaking by. Humor is the only way you can get anything published in syndication. There are only a handful of people making a heck of a lot of money; Charlie Schultz or Mort Walker, people like that.

CF: As you said, humor artists.

Kubert: Yes, and only humor artists. Whereas comic books over a broader outlook there are many more people making much more money than the average syndicate artist.

CF: According to Dick Giordano someone who just pencils for the company can actually make $100,000 a year which was unheard of 20 years ago.

Kubert: Well, throwing around figures, I'm very hesitant. I'm sure that it's possible if Dick said so. He would know. He's in a position to know. It would be a lot of turned out pencil work.

CF: How has DC changed since Warner took it over?

Kubert: I think the big changes occured when Jenette Kahn took over as president. She's a remarkable young lady. She's described a lot of the things she'd like to do; how she would like to see creative people, with whom she'd be working, advance in their position and get both credit and money for their efforts, more so than has been before. I think she, in all probability, has more to do with the enviable position DC finds itself in than any other one person.

CF: How much influence do you think Giordano has had on the industry?

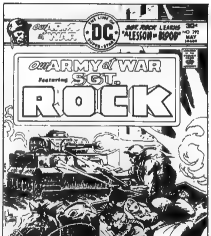
Kubert: Dick was working very closely with Neal Adams when they were working at Continuity. He was very influencial, as was Neal, with trying to institute a better position for the artist and the writer. Dick is taking the exact same position here as Editorial Director — Editor-in-Chief for the comic books. I know from actual dealings with Dick that he breaks his back trying to get the best breaks possible for everybody who's working here.

CF: Do you think he is realy and truly committed to trying to bring new talent into the industry?

Kubert: There's no question about it. It's not a position he takes because he's such a wonderful guy, Its a matter of need and necessity. For the first time since this business has been around, talent is really a decisive factor. That was not always so. When I started out, you could throw almost anything in a comic book. If it came out between covers it would sell. It would vary perhaps,

THE LIGHTS FROM THE BURNIN' SHIPS WENT OUT... WE WERE LEFT IN THE DARKNESS AGAIN... BUT--I KNEW THE COMBAT-HAPPY JOES WERE LISTENIN'--AND I HAD TO STOP THIS SOLDIER'S RAVIN'--BEFORE IT WOULD TEAR AWAY WHATEVER STILL KEPT EASY ON ITS FEET TO FACE THE ENEMY.
NOTHIN'S EVER LOST IN WAR!
I'M LOST, SERGEANT! EVERYONE'S LOST! YOU AND EASY TOO! LOST! LOST! LOST!!

THE JOE KUBERT SCHOOL
PRESENTS:
1ST FOLIO
JOE KUBERT '83



as far as magazines were concerned, one from the other, except for a Superman or something like that. The greatest bulk of the books, however, it didn't matter what you put into the books because the variation would differ very little. It's different now because the kind of readership we have is extremely more selective than those who were reading comic books before and there are necessarily less of them. We find then that the type of work being put out demands talent. The people who are able to put the words and the music, so to speak, together. Dick is doing his best to bring new talent in here because that's the life blood of this whole industry as of right now.

CF: You're not doing too badly on that score yourself with your school. Why did you start your school?

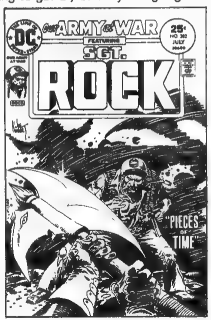
Kubert: The school is sort of an extension of my own experience as I described to you before, when I started out in the business. It's pretty much a pay back. I am involved in the school as much as any other instructor there. My wife is really the one who runs the place. If I had to run the place, I would have closed the doors two weeks after I opened it because anything that would inhibit me from doing my own work is something I just couln't involve myself in. Aside from the fact that I hate that kind of business.

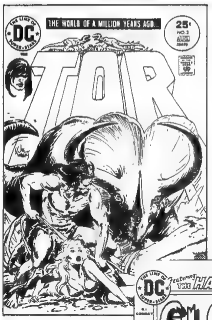
CF: You mean the administration.

Kubert: Yes.

CF: That's what happened with John Buscema, his school, he had to close it because it was interfering with his work.

Kubert: I think the students were fortunate that we were able to work it out in this manner. The idea of putting out a school is not something that's original in my own thinking. Its something that guys in my business have talked back and forth all the time. The reason being that we, in the position of having jobs, have been approached by everybody wanting to break in. Much more so years ago than even now. I received literally thousands of letters from people out in Oshkosh saying, "Well, I like doing this kind of stuff but what kind of paper do you use, what kind of pencil do you use, how do you do this and how do you do that?" When the person is close enough physically you can give that kind of advice, but when they're on the other end of the United States, it's very difficult to say anything but "Gee you stuff looks nice...keep trying." Keep trying what? Where? So I figured if we could ever really put a school together, physically put some place together where we could put all the things that were necessary for a person to know to get into the business, that I would make an attempt to do that. We did that seven years ago. You mentioned before that you'd been attending the School of Visual Arts and that you were hesitant about going to a school described like mine because you figured all you would learn to do is be a comic book artist...That's not true, and again I'm not proselytizing, but merely as an example of what's going on at the school, there's a 10-course curriculum and what we try to do at the school is try to insure that when a person comes out, they're going to get a job. They are going to be able to





make a living in this field. It is more difficult, in fact, to make a living in the cartoon field if you allow yourself to be interested in one small facet of the cartoon media. Even if you're a good comic book artist there is no insurance that you have that a year later you're going to be employed as a comic book artist, should that area that you're working in soften. Superhero—if the superhero one year from now deflates as has happened before with Superman and a lot of other characters that have come out—those people who could only do superhero characters are going to fall by the wayside. If you can, however, do political cartoons, sports cartoons, children's books, paintings, cover painting, stuff like **Heavy Metal,** stuff like **Epic Magazine,** humor and adventure stuff, work so that you can do anything that applies to the cartoon, commercial art field; have the wherewithall and knowledge to go to a screening, print place, a place that does speed printing for you in ten minutes, even if it's a one man shop, if you can come to that place and say look, I can draw, I can hand letter, I can spec type, I can work your stat machine; all of which are in the courses at my school. That man is likely to hire you even if he has a one man shop because he is hiring five people in one. He's not just hiring somebody who can do layouts, they can do the whole piece, and that's a very valuable person. Today, in order to be able to make a livilihood, the cartoonist has to be like a Renaissance artist. He has to be able to apply himself to a multitude of places. That's why a guy like Frank Frazetta can do the kind of painting that he does. Comic book artists...

CF: Great cartoonists.

Kubert: Great cartoonist is right. The guy who did...who ghosted Little Abner for years had that kind of versatility. That's the only way you can really make a life.

CF: And that's the kind of artist you're trying to turn out—isn't it?

Kubert: That **is** the kind of artist because if he isn't, he never gets out of my school.

CF: What's happening as far as the deal you made with your school with Pacific? I'm interested.

Kubert: It's very fortuitous. This is a deal that has been emulated. We did offer something to NEA. We did a Christmas story—incidently none of these things were ever solicited by myself.

CF: People came to you.

Kubert: Exactly. These were all unsolicited things. In specific we were doing educational material with DC with the students, and none of this work that comes, and this is a work study program that is done after school hours. There is nothing that takes the place of the school work. Incidently, you might be interested to know that the guys who attend my school attend five days a week from nine in the morning to three thirty in the afternoon and are drawing anywhere from 8 to 10 hours a day at least seven days a week. Now those are the ones who can involve themselves on the projects that come in, but only after hours, only if their work is up to par in the regular school, only if their assignments are all done. They can then be approached by Pacific—they ask us to supply them with 100 pages a year of short stories, any subject matter.

CF: Did you come up with the scripts or did they?

Kubert: The scripts are all ours. The whole schmoo is done by us. We do the lettering, writing, coloring, drawing, everything.

CF: And you just about ship the finished pages out to them.

Kubert: That's correct.

CF: And its all variety subject matter.

Kubert: Yes.

CF: Well that's great. Do they tell you what book or books that's going to be used in?

Kubert: No, only that they should not exceed eight pages in length. I just spoke to Mike Friedrich, who is the person I've been working with at Pacific, and gotten correspondence from the people up at Pacific this past week. They are very enthusiastic about the kind of work that has been turned in to them. I think we are one of the few people who have met all deadlines and contractual responsibilities. They are thinking about doing some other things. It would be premature to tell you about them now because nothing is set. But it sounds extremely interesting.

CF: Which of your students in the past have been your assistants?

Kubert: I've never had any assistants.

CF: You've never had any of your students help you, any of the war books or anything?

Kubert: No. I've helped some of the students but they've never helped me. I've never taken on any assistants from any of the students that I can recall. I've had someone from outside the school who I felt might be able to handle the Sgt. Rock character and he started doing it and I worked along with him trying to get him to the point where he could do it himself.

CF: What was his name?

Kubert: Jack Colada.

CF: I've seen his work and kept noticing the similarities...

Kubert: I worked on it very heavily with him. That might have hurt him more than helped him. But nevertheless it just...

CF: It just maintained the look of the book.

Kubert: His initial style-his original style is something that I felt was close to it. I felt eventually he would get to the point where he would be able to do the whole thing himself. That was what I was striving for.

CF: Is the school accredited to grant a degree?

Kubert: Not a degree. We're not a degree issuing school. We give a certificate.

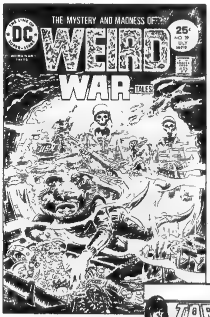
CF: Are you more like a technical school?

Kubert: That's right. We are in the category of a technical and trade school but we are accredited as far as financial aid and student loans.

CF: But you don't have humanities requirements?

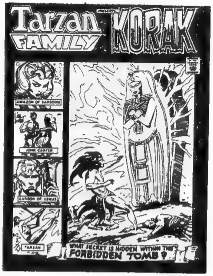
Kubert: We have no exteraneous subjects taken at the school at all. All 10 courses are intergal for the cartoonist—for the commercial artist—when he gets out to get a job.

CF: I think that those art schools that are accredited have the humanities classes that you just have to take to get the degree.



Kubert: I think that would be virtually impossible for our students. A student who attends my school has to go for three years. I hope this doesn't sound like a sell, because I don't mean it to be. If we had any other subject other than that which is absolutely essential for them to know, they would never get out of there. What we have done is the three years that a student attends the school is that we have compressed into those three years what it took us as instructors 10 or 12 or 15 years to get to. They have a hell of a lot of work to do. It's just pure unadulterated sweat. That's all. Guys who teach there are people like...well Dick Giordano taught there...Dick taught at my school for a while. We've had Lee Elias. We have Hy Eisman who does the Little Iodine for King Features, and we have Earl Hassan who does Dondi. Sal Amendola teaches there. We have about 15 instructors

Kubert: Do you have any guest instructors?



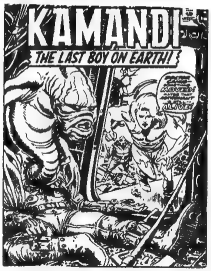
Kubert: Will Eisner has spoken there several times. Sergio Aragones has come. Al Williamson has been there. A bunch of terrific guys have come. Some have asked me to... Al Williamson has asked to come back. The guys set an example. I don't pay them for coming over. They don't get any money for spending a day or half a day. Will has done that as I have done it in his class as well. Sergio has spent the full day drawing. He did a drawing for every damn one of the students in the school. Its incredible.

CF: How many students do you have?

Kubert: We now have about 175 full and part-time students.

CF: Sergio must have kept his hands in an ice bucket...

Kubert: Oh no, when Sergio was there, there were about 50 or 60. Its grown every year.



CF: Are you pleased with the success of your students like Jan Duursema and Steve Bissette?

Kubert: That they're coming through and gaining the level of prominence that they have is really a result of their own sweat. They worked for it. Every one of them.

CF: Which of your students do you think will be tomorrow's stars? Do you have a new Frank Frazetta among your students?

Kubert: A couple of them I hope. But I would never predict. It's more than just the ability to do the drawing. It takes a lot more,than that to really succeed. Frank Frazetta was fortunate to have the kind of wife who enabled him to do what he wanted to do. I don't know if you're aware of it, but Frank's wife is like a protective shield around the guy.

CF: I've met her.

Kubert: He was the kind of guy before who could never get his work done because he was the kind of guy who would never say no to anybody when you came over or talked to him or whatever. Like I say, it takes more then just being able to draw the stuff to get to a level where you can say whether you're going to be a success or not. Lee once told us, when he was teaching at the School of Visual Arts very early in its creation, there was a student in his class who he told not to continue in the field. The guy he told not to go into this business worked for **Playboy** he's the one who does these weird eerie...

CF: Gahan Wilson! Oh my god.

Kubert: He told Gahan Wilson he wasn't going to be a cartoonist. He told him you just can't draw. You just can't

draw. Why do you want to knock yourself out for? Why don't you sell shoes or something? And Lee told the story on himself. He was the one who told it to us. Just to show you that you really can't tell and that it's not just a person's drawing ability. Wilson was apparently the type of person that no matter what anybody said, was going to work and sweat and do it until he did.

CF: Whose work do you like currently in comics?

Kubert: I must admit that the three people who are my goals, my shining stars, have not changed over the years. I'm more impressed with their work now than when I was a kid. Especially Raymond, Alex Raymond constantly. I was speaking to Frank Giacoia just a while ago and he was saying that when I feel lousy and I look around and I don't see anything that really can lend any enthusiasm to me, I just break open a box and I look through Raymond's and Foster's stuff. That type of thing.

CF: But there's nobody in the business today who really impresses you?

Kubert: Oh, no. There are a lot of people who impress me. George Perez does some work...What the younger people have—oh how shall I put this—there are areas in George's drawings that I'm not in agreement with. I guess that was tactful enough. Nevertheless, that's only part of what it takes to make a successful strip. George and a lot of other young cartoonists supply a fervor and an attachment to what they're doing, to their drawing that it comes out regardless of the drawing's shortcomings. There is a life and an animation and a feeling about what they're doing and that comes through. That's what hooks on and that is the message and that's the communication. That's what hooks on to the people who are buying and reading the stuff; there's no substitution for that. Conversely, if you try to sell a story with just beautiful drawings, it would never sell.

CF: How about someone like Garcia Lopez?

Kubert: Garcia Lopez is a fantastic...fantastic artist. There are so many. Nestor Redondo had done a job on the Bible illustrations (for the DC Treasury) that I have yet to see duplicated by anybody in the business, just absolutely magnificent.

CF: What do you think of someone like Dave Stevens? He's doing the Rocketeer. Have you seen that?

Kubert: Yes.

CF: What about Frank Miller?

Kubert: Frank is an excellent storyteller.

CF: Craig Russell?

Kubert: Excellent technician. Good storyteller, but someone who I think is more heavily oriented towards illustration than he is toward storytelling. His stuff has a tendency to become a little too decorative for my likes, but he's excellent.

CF: What about Bernie Wrightson?

Kubert: Bernie is a crackerjack. You know that whole group of guys.

CF: Did you enjoy their work when they first started getting into the business?

Kubert: Well, to the extent that when Mike Kaluta came to me...

CF: Mike? You were Mike's editor, weren't you?

Kubert: Sure. He was doing the Carson of Venus series for me and I was so impressed in his involvement and what he was doing, even though I felt a lot of his drawing

was short of what he is able to do today. I still gave him carte blanche and said, "Look, take five pages verbatim and transfer what you read in to illustrations. I'm not going to edit them, I'm not going to change any of your drawings. I just want to make sure that you adhere as closely as possible to the original version." Which he did, and I think its some of the most successful stuff that he ever did.

CF: It's probably one of the best adaptations of Burroughs since Foster. Getting back to what you were saying about the younger artists' attachments to characters— that wasn't really the case in the old days was it? It was more like a job.

Kubert: Actually, That's true... the attempt, as a matter of fact, the overt attempt, was made by the editors and the guys who were putting the stuff together and packaging it, to make sure that the artists didn't feel like prima donnas..didn't feel like "artists" so to speak. They were just mechanics turning out work for which they were getting paid. As a matter of fact, its only been in the last 10 or 12 years... people like myself, when we started working, would kind-of hide the fact that we were cartoonists, because generally speaking, doing stuff for comic books...If you were doing stuff for syndication, but comic book artist, that was kind of a denigrating kind of term. Most of us who were cartoonists at the time weren't really proud of that fact. The guys we were working for kind of upheld that opinion that we had of ourselves—"If we don't get you we'll get somebody else...don't knock yourself out; don't read it too carefully." If you made a suggestion with the script, forget about it. You had to follow the script exactly and precisely as it was put down. The pride and feeling people have in their work today, because of the participation, couldn't have existed at that time. For me to have been doing a script and suggesting changes in that story would have been as presumptuous as for me trying to do a tightrope act at the same time. It just wasn't done.

CF: Kirby and Frazetta told the story that they had to hide the fact that they were drawing from the kids in the neighborhood because it was looked down upon.

Kubert: I never had that problem. As a matter of fact, I remember it was quite enhancing for me, because when I was a real little kid people would buy me boxes of chalk, penny boxes of chalk to draw on the streets, on the gutters. My friends, when they knew I knew how to draw, drew a girl on my arm. Being able to draw has never been anything that I've tried to hide. As a matter of fact, when I was in the Army, it proved to be one of the most helpful things I could imagine.

BEHOLD! WHAT ARE THOSE STRANGE SHAPES?
THOSE ARE GHOSTLY WARRIORS OF THE ICE KING'S LEGION. MY BLADE HAS KILLED ON THEM!
© 1982 DC Comics

CF: You mean along the lines of making friends?

Kubert: No. I was placed in special services immediately upon my completing basic training. I shipped to Germany; I was in special services; me and the 2nd Lieutenant were running the whole outfit. I was permanently stationed in South Germany in 1950 only because I could draw. There was a transfer that was taking place at the time. The Cold War was extant. The Berlin Air Lift was in effect. There was a lot of talk about imminent war taking place with Russia behind the Iron Curtain and all that stuff. But outside of that, it was a blast. It was terrific.

CF: Were you doing any art work?

Kubert: Oh yes. Sending it to Julie Schwartz who at that time was my editor.

CF: You mean, you were still working in comics during the time you were in the service?

Kubert: Oh yes.

CF: Moonlighting?

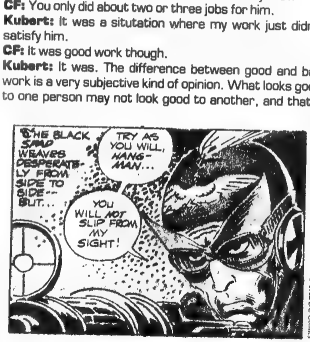
Kubert: Even while I was taking my basic training.

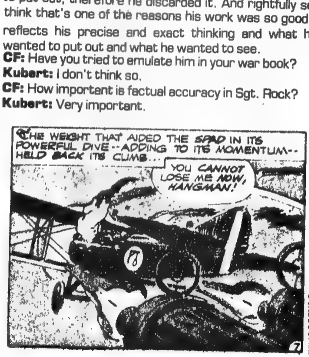
CF: It must have been difficult making deadlines.

Kubert: As a matter of fact, one of the things that a cartoonist learns is that you're constantly busy with a deadline. You have a deadline for every day that you're in the business. When we were producing the 3-D comic books...

CF: That was Tor wasn't it?

Kubert: That was Tor and the Three Stooges.
CF: Were you drawing the Three Stooges?
Kubert: I was with my buddy Norm. There were sections that I inked, sure. I'll never forget this, it necessitated that we work three day and three nights straight through, without sleep, in order to put that thing together. We did that. After the second night you find that you feel like you're walking on sponges with your feet sinking four feet into the ground. You'd be amazed at what you can do when you really have to. Well, when you want to.
CF: Was being a cartoonist in the old days pretty crazy?
Kubert: Only in retrospect. At the time they seemed completely normal. Its only when you think about it afterwards that it seems totally nuts. It was good times.
CF: What material were you doing while you were in the service?
Kubert: I was doing stories for both DC and for another company I was working for.
CF: You did Tor for St. John's.
Kubert: That was after I got out of the Army.
CF: EC was also after you got out of the Army.
Kubert: Yes. Shortly after I got out of the Army I did some work for EC. That was when I worked with Kurtzman.
CF: Was that your first exposure to war books?
Kubert: Yes, my stuff with Kurtzman was my first.
CF: You only did about two or three jobs for him.
Kubert: It was a situtation where my work just didn't satisfy him.
CF: It was good work though.
Kubert: It was. The difference between good and bad work is a very subjective kind of opinion. What looks good to one person may not look good to another, and that's one thing that every guy who is starting out in the business has to realize. You bring your work up to an editor and that guy says, "With this work, what makes you think you'll ever want to be a cartoonist?" If you listen to him, well, then maybe he's right.
CF: Back then though, Kurtzman had a very specific vision of what he wanted done with the books. It wasn't a matter of whether it was good or bad, just a matter of if you saw the thing the way he did.
Kubert: I guess so. Harvey is to my mind...again the appelation of genius is one I can accredit to very few people and he is one of them.
CF: What do you think of his war books, looking back on them?
Kubert: Terrrific. Amazing. I find that a sign of real quality-class work is usually that which expresses a particular idea. Something that the person who is putting out the work has complete control over—good or bad. That work at least gives the person who is looking at it the idea of one thrust, one direction, one idea as to a peice of work that might be a result of a committee where you're trying to please a lot of people and don't; please anybody. Harvey's work...Harvey had an idea. Harvey had a thought that he wanted to execute. Something specific. He didn't care what. He didn't care who was involved. My work wasn't in the idea he wanted to put out, therefore he discarded it. And rightfully so. I think that's one of the reasons his work was so good. It reflects his precise and exact thinking and what he wanted to put out and what he wanted to see.
CF: Have you tried to emulate him in your war book?
Kubert: I don't think so.
CF: How important is factual accuracy in Sgt. Rock?
Kubert: Very important.


THE BLACK SAND WEAVES DESPERATELY FROM SIDE TO SIDE--SLIT...
TRY AS YOU WILL, HANGMAN..
YOU WILL NOT SLIP FROM MY SIGHT!
© 1962 DC Comics


THE WEIGHT THAT AIDED THE SPAD IN ITS POWERFUL DIVE--ADDING TO ITS MOMENTUM--HELD BACK ITS CLIMB...
YOU CANNOT LOSE ME NOW, HANGMAN!
© 1962 DC Comics

WHEN--SUDDENLY--I WAS NOT ALONE! I COULD FEEL THE ACCUSING EYES OF THE NAM'S SISTER, DENISE...HEAR HER SCREAM, ABOVE THE SOUND OF MY PACKARD'S ENGINE...
CONTINUED ON 2-B PAGE SOMEWHERE

CF: Do you mean the detail in the costuming and everything?

Kubert: Very important and it's true not only in Sgt. Rock but in any other comic strip story or comic book story that you're going to be doing. Unless the character is credible and believable... if you put a gun in his hand that doesn't look like a gun then the whole character becomes incredible. If you do Superman walking along the streets and the buildings don't look like buildings then you don't believe that Superman is a real character either. Research and reference is extremely important.

CF: Do you stress that with your students?

Kubert: Oh yes. Everyone has to have their own file or start putting together their own file or reference system immediately.

CF: What was it like drawing comics during the war years, when the war was going on? Were you encouraged to show the Japanese and Germans as subhuman and funny looking?

Kubert: Absolutely. Every one of us was bombarded with that kind of propaganda. Yes, the Japanese were our enemies, the Germans were our enemies. And they were subhuman because they were our enemies. As a matter of fact, if the general population was not whipped into that kind of frenzy, how the hell could you run a war? I would be the last person to say I didn't feel that way, because I did. The stories that went around during the war of atrocities that occured in Germany and atrocities that occured in fighting in the Pacific only made us feel even more so.

CF: And it turned out that a lot of them were true.

Kubert: A lot of them were true on both sides.

CF: During the Viet Nam War, however, there was a different attitude toward the war and consequently toward the war books.

Kubert: That's one of the reasons I guess that its only been recently that war stories, movies, and comic books about Viet Nam have been coming out. Again, I guess its a case of propaganda. Its a case where the general public can be misled, by those people who are supposedly giving them information.

CF: The general population's attitude about the war that what killed the "Tales of the Green Beret"?

Kubert: No, not at all. In my own opinion, the reason why the Green Beret strip died was just that it wasn't being done well. The interit of the Green Beret strip was one where we were going to use the idea from the Robin Moore book as a spingboard and then go on to a "Terry and the Pirates" type strip. It was an unhappy situation, and an unhappy circumstance for me because what I thought would work as the editorial direction of the strip just didn't work out that way.

CF: Were you writing or was Moore doing it?

Kubert: That was one of the problems with it. Moore didn't write it either. He just kind of checked it. Robin is a tremendous guy. The person who was doing the writing was a guy named Jerry Capp, Al Capp's brother.

CF: How long did Jack Abel ink for you on that?

Kubert: Just a couple of weeks. That was when I was falling behind on the deadlines. I was falling behind because I was unhappy with the way the strip was going and I found it more and more of a job and more difficult to get to it because I was unhappy with it.

CF: So how long did the Green Berets run?

Kubert: Two and a half years.

CF: Two and a half years? The dailys and Sundays?

Kubert: Yes. It probably would have continued but I stepped away from it, probably about four or five months before it died. I just couldn't continue under the circumstances.

CF: Who continued it?

Kubert: Several artist tried it. Johnny Celardo was one. There were one or two others who did the strip after me, but I guess it just died.

CF: How is working for a syndicate different then working for regular comics?

Kubert: Oh boy. The deadlines on syndicated strips are absolutely stringent, there is no leewey at all. If you miss one day, there's two days you have to make up next time. There is no way a daily newspaper is going to run a blank spot instead of your strip. The deadlines are horrendous. Whether you're doing a humor strip or a continuity, they are absolutely deadly. They are the toughest as far as I'm concerned. The toughest job in the world.

CF: So you much prefer doing comics.

Kubert: No. There are compensation in doing stuff for syndication. One is that you're supposedly working for a more mature audience. The second is the immediacy, your strip can come out within a matter of a month and a half, two months. When you're doing a strip for comic books, you may see three or four months pass before that which you did three or four months earlier will get into a magazine. There's pros and cons both places. There is a lot more freedom in a comic book as far as layout is concerned and continuity of story.

CF: As far as characters go, did it mean anything for you to come back to Hawkman after the long hiatus in the 60s?

Kubert: It was a kick but nothing else. It was nice. There are very few pet projects, projects that I really... The ones that I really want to get into are the ones which I feel I have complete and total control over. I feel very inhibited when I'm illustrating somebody else's work, though I feel some of my more successful work was done in collaboration with Bob Kanigher. I personally would rather do my own work. I'd rather have whether it is good or bad be mine.

CF: Are you basically in control of the series that you're doing?

Kubert: Yes.

CF: When is thet being published?

Kubert: Its a series that is set for publication in November of this year. It is a maxi-series. It is a new character that I'm writing and drawing.

CF: You're going to be pencilling and inking?

Kubert: Yes. Everything,yes. The first book will be done before the end of this month, I hope.

CF: Can you tell us what sort of character it is going to be ?

Kubert: There is going to be some more publicity coming out. Let it suffice to say that it's not going to be a superhero type of character, yet it has some of those elements. It's not a science fiction character, yet it has some of those elements. Its a pretty good story, I think.

CF: Are you excited about it?

AND AS ONE OF THE HAMMER OF HELL'S PILOTS--YOU WILL PARTICIPATE IN BATTLES THAT WILL ADD HONOR TO THE NAME OF VON KLEIT! EH, MY SON?
Y-YES, FATHER... I WONDER--HOW MANY WILL RETURN FROM THAT MISSION?
© DC Comics

Kubert: Very much so. More excited than I have been in years.

CF: Is it going to be a monthly maxi-series?

Kubert: Yes.

CF: How are you going to cope with that and your work as editor?

Kubert: So far I have been able to do it.

CF: Are you pretty fast?

Kubert: I don't know. I've heard people say that I can turn out work pretty fast. I think that's also misleading, because Russ Heath and I used to have...Russ Heath used to work for me when I did Sgt. Rock on a monthly basis, until I found out it was impossible to put out a book on a monthly basis when you get a strip from an artist every two months. Russ would say, "Well gee, you're so damn fast. That's how you get all that work done." But the fact of the matter is not that I'm fast, I just spent more time sitting at a drawing board than he did. My hands moved as quickly, my drawings got done more quickly, but I spent more time sitting at the drawing board than he did. That's all. That's what really gets the stuff done.

CF: How fast can you do a page?

Kubert: I could probably do two pages a dey.

CF: Infantino used to do a weekly page on television with water. I remember one story someone told me, that one of the editors had gone back and there was Infantino sitting at the drawing table several hours after quitting time, and there were pages rumpled all over the place. He had been doing this one page over and over again and he wouldn't leave until he finished it.

Kubert: Carmine is one of the most terrific guys I know. He's just an outstanding artist. He has a terrific sense of design and a terrific way of telling a story. You asked me before who I felt was pretty good around today. Probably most of the people I appreciate are of the European background. I like Giraud. The respect that I have for him is because of the elasticity that most of the earlier people here in the United States showed. He is able to work in almost any style in almost any media essentially telling his story. The stuff in animation now is the same approach as the science fiction stuff. Giraud has given birth...just like anybody who has gained popularity. Giraud had a lot of people emmulate him. There are one or two guys who are emulating me I'm told. It's very flattering.

CF: I understand that a lot of people who's style doesn't look like Mobius are incorporating his influence. Like Miller is.

STRANGE...OUR TRACKS ARE DIFFERENT-BUT OUR SOULS ARE THE SAME! WE ARE BOTH KILLERS... CHOSEN BY FATE FOR OUR PRESCRIBED TASKS!
© 1982 DC Comics

Kubert: I haven't seen Frank's work.

CF: It's an infectious thing. Once you see it, it starts to creep in. Many fans don't approach Mobius. They are somewhat closed to him and to a lot of other people. Do you have any opinion to what they like?

Kubert: As I described earlier in our interview here, I think that a lot of things have changed as far as our audience is concerned, what they are looking for and what they are not looking for. I must tell you on top of everything else, above and beyond everything, my attitude toward the kind of material to put out in my capacity as an editor or an artist is really to put out the stuff that I like, that I enjoy, and I very rarely find it

MY YOUNG INEXPERIENCED PILOTS SHIVER... IS IT FROM THE COLD OR EXCITEMENT?...
OR FEAR?
THEY ARE SO YOUNG--TOO YOUNG...
WHY MUST THE YOUNG ALWAYS BE THE COST OF WAR'S VICTORY?
GENTLEMEN -- MOUNT YOUR AIR CRAFT!
© 1988 DC Comics

possible to try to figure out what somebody else is going to like or dislike. What I try to do is really what Harvey did and that was to put out stuff that I think I'd like that I'd be interested in and hope there would be enough people like me who would be interested in the same thing...

CF: Was that your approach when you were doing Tor back in the 50s?

Kubert: Oh yes.

CF: That character was a classic. I mean that love, it shows. How did it come about that DC reprinted all that stuff?

Kubert: Carmine was the editor and publisher at that time. He asked me if I'd like to do a Tor book again. The first book was a result of something Carmine and I had done...He had actually written it years before and outlined a syndicated strip featuring Tor.

CF: I was going to ask you if you ever thought about doing it in that manner.

Kubert: I finished up about two weeks of dailies that Carmine had essentially given me and they were the two weeks that were incorporated into the first issue of the first Tor book. Then I found I was too loaded down with other work that I had to do and Carmine felt rather then kill the book he would use the reprints from thirty years before.

CF: I know Tor is your character. How did you get a character that you owned published by DC? They generally don't do that.

Kubert: The character Tor is still owned by me. The arrangement was that the copyright would be under the DC banner for Tor until and unless they were not interested in publishing. Very frankly, there are all different ways of working contracts. I don't mind who has the copyright as long as I have additional contracts that tie me into whatever happens with it permanently.

CF: Do you have any plans of going back and doing one last Tor story?

Kubert: I hope so. That still is my favorite character. As a matter of fact, not too long ago I saw that film, "Quest of Fire," and I thought that was done just beautifully. There was a flavor there that I would love to incorporate into the Tor strip.

CF: Would you ever like to do a Tor graphic novel?

Kubert: Yes.

CF: As somebody whose experimented with alternative press, with your **Sojourn** book, what do you think of the alternative press today?

Kubert: I think it gives an opportunity for a lot of people who would never have the chance to get a foothold in the business. It gives the opportunity and I applaud the attempts of alternative press to go ahead and do what they're doin. It lends an atmosphere for new talent to come in and participate in whatever they create. It's really pushed a lot of permanent publishers into doing the precise same thing.

CF: And give the creators royalties?

Kubert: That's right.

CF: Joe, what do you think you've brought into the comics industry? What is your contribution?

Kubert: I don't know. I would be thinking more in terms of what this industry has done for me. Again, like I said right at the beginnning, I consider myself perhaps one of the luckiest people in the world. I'm able to do what I enjoy more than anything in the world and still get paid for it. My contribution...I can't even think in those terms.

WELCOME TO THE BARGAIN BASEMENT LIBRARY...hope you're ready to take a look at a few "GUD BOOX"! Given the orientation of most of you folks out there reading this magazine, it seems fair to assume that the sort of books that might pique your interests would have to relate **somehow** to the visually unusual, graphically exciting, and/or conceptually curious...and that's exactly the sort of fare we'd like to bring to your attention. We also hope that you'll bring some oddities to our attention.

For those of you out there who haunt the sale racks of your local bookstores, shuffle off to odd and exotic locales only to find yourself hovering over half-price stacks of publisher's discards, peepers wide open to snag whatever li'l gems may linger... well, for those of you, there's this here column. Here's a few books I've luckily stumbled upon in my travels, and maybe if I mention 'em to you, you'll turn around and write about some interesting items you've found, and this column might turn into something we can **all** take a look at every issue to find out what might be waiting for us, somewhere, sometime, on those 'Sale Books' shelves...

****

Under the deceptively dull title of **Let's PlayChess** (by Anthony Zansford; hardcover, 1980, Octopus Books, London) lurk some knock-out color paintings by **John Bolton** in which armies of chess pieces are brought to life in all their barbaric splendor: Rooks ride giant armored wooly mammoths, beautious Queens fire magical bolts of energy from their fingers, Knights on horseback and crusader Bishops battle it out with shimmering swords and massive maces, faceless pawns scuttle up on unsuspecting firelit guards and stab them in the back in sneaky opening moves. Chess never looked so good!

Bolton's paintings herein are just as

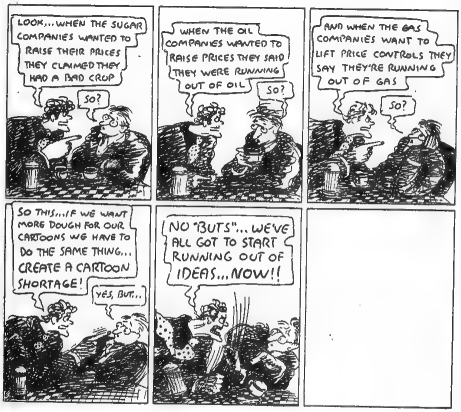
vital and savagely alive as his work in comics, especially his definitive King Kull stories for Marvel and his color paintings are as carefully rendered as his best black and white illustrations. Check this book out, but let the buyer beware: comic shops and book dealers are selling copies of **Let's Play Chess** for $10-20 a shot, whereas it can be found in bookstores, hidden amid the slew of Octopus picturebooks available [covering a wide range of material, from how-to-do and cookbooks, to volumes on travel, animals, war, you name it] for only three or four books. A damned good bargain, and definitely one to look for!

****

Edward Sorel's pen is as sharp as that of David Levine or Oliphant, as demonstrated for years now in the pages of **Esquire**, **Atlantic**, **The Village Voice**, etc., scribbly itchy ink and all. His caricatures and observations are on-target, lucidly funny and scarey at the same time, a brand of cartooning which had never seemed to me to be — well, intimate, perhaps because editorial cartooning's lifeblood is usually nothing less than the often staggering tapestry of this country's [and this planet's] political and public arena of events. One of these boxes of $1.99 books in Woolworth's showed me otherwise: **Superpen** by Edward Sorel [hardcover, 1978, Random House] presents a wide array of Sorel's works and wit...a caustic eye cast out on the world, and in on the cartoonist himself and the conventions [and possibilities] of 'comics', the flow and form of sequential panels with word ballons and characters livid with the life of the scribbly itchy lines.

****

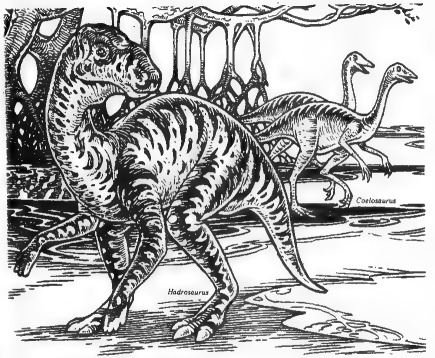
For a perhaps too-close-for-comfort confrontation with the latest brushwork from a cartoonist of a slightly different...uh, bent, you'll have to wander away from the bargain shelves toward the children's books section, or perhaps even in the toy or games store across the way. Tucked in with the likes of oragami, Fred Flintstone, and E.T. coloring books, you'll perhaps be lucky enough to dig out a series of coloring books put out by Bellerophon Books [36 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara CA 93101] that showcase the talents of none other than **Greg Irons**. Underground epics ran like ruddy ink from the minds and hands of Tom Veitch and Greg Irons between the fetid pages of **Skull Comics, Slow Death, Grunt,** and **Devient Slice,** and even their tepid fare could induce spasms of revulsion in the most jaded EC-addict. somewhere between the era of G.I./T.V. brainspew and the opening of Irons' tattoo parlor in California, Greg mellowed out long enough to crank out four or five [maybe more] beautiful coloring books suitable for themost delicate of brainpans.


LOOK...WHEN THE SUGAR COMPANIES WANTED TO RAISE THEIR PRICES THEY CLAIMED THEY HAD A BAD CROP.
SO?
WHEN THE OIL COMPANIES WANTED TO RAISE PRICES THEY SAID THEY WERE RUNNING OUT OF OIL.
SO?
AND WHEN THE GAS COMPANIES WANT TO LIFT PRICE CONTROLS THEY SAY THEY'RE RUNNING OUT OF GAS
SO?
SO THIS...IF WE WANT MORE DOUGH FOR OUR CARTOONS WE HAVE TO DO THE SAME THING... CREATE A CARTOON SHORTAGE!
YES, BUT...
NO "BUTS"... WE'VE ALL GOT TO START RUNNING OUT OF IDEAS...NOW!!

Edward Sorel's advice to underpaid cartoonists: Editors, take note!

Three of the Bellerophon coloring books are about dinosaurs [**All New Dinosaurs and their Friends**; **The Last of the Dinosaurs**; and **A Coloring Books of Dinosaurs**] amd are chock-full of 'new info' about the previous residents of Mother Earth, accompanied by some of Irons' most eye-pleasing brushwork in print, wielding an impeccable sense of design and detail. Ditto the Irons-illos in **A Coloring Book of Sea Mammals** and **Pirates**, though these two seem a bit more simplistic and straight-forward in execution than the prehistoric landscapes, brimming over with a rich variety of flora and fauna. All of the Bellerophon books go for less than $3, so give 'em a gander. The covers are embellished with tasty colors, likewise courtesy of master color-seperator Irons.

A nifty Irons painting wraparounds Troubador Press's **The Official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Coloring Album**, and though the illos here cry out for color [more than the polished artwork for the Belerophon dinosaur books does], Greg's dilineations of the D&D cast of characters and creatures are lots of fun. Accompanied by Gary Gygax's terse and turgid texts, full-page drawings give fire and form to mon-



strous horse-swallowing Bulettes, absurd Beholders, the reptilian unicorn-like Ki-rin, rampaging Ettin or Umberhulk, and, in the book's most stylish piece, the five-headed dragon Tiamat, "ruler of all evil wormkind"!

Though the non-participatory viewer may lose track of the Quest in all the hubbub, there's no denying the charm of Iron's seedy 'heroes' and the sly good-natured bloodlusting villainy of his monsters and demons.

At a time when my fascination with the paintings of H.R. Giger was at its peak of sorts, a close friend turned me on to **Manas Manna,** the paintings of **Bob Venosa** collected into book (paperbound) form by none other than Big O Publishing of London (publishers of Giger's **Necronomicon**. I don't mean to shade Bob Venosa's unique vision with that of Giger's eerie ouevre, but I wonder if I would have been so responsive to the beauty of Venosa's manipulations of light had I not bathed so completely (with so many others who were dazzled and outraged by the revelation of Giger's vision as it reached us in the wake of ALIEN) in the beauty of Giger's monstrous meditations of darkness. Such beauty is almost unbearable alluring, and Venosa provides a necessary balance, if you will...the spiritual polar extremity to Giger's demonic art, rendered with the same compelling, unflinching clarity. Whereas Giger reveals in the textures of bloated flesh and polished metal fused into unholy, tangible life, Venosa celebrates shimmering liquid-crystalline organics. Giger's beings take the shapes of Satanic minions and seething monsters, reeking of death, while Venosa's creations embrace the Godhead amid the spectrum of ethereal light, breathing love. And to belabor the bonding of Venosa and Giger's Big O showcases, **Manas Manna** couples its visuals with a lengthy autobiographical text by the artist. The resulting glimpse into the life and loves (not the least of which are his paintings) of the man and his art more than equals that offered by you-know-who in the **Necronomicon**. Taken individually, both of these artists can touch the soul; approached together, in the form of the two companion books, they provide good medicine to the open 'reader'. They can heal.

A closer spiritual companion to Venosa, and a closer comrade on the cut-rate book shelves, might be found

Greg Irons' 2-D alter-ego Grego the Purpleass Baboon makes a cameo appearance as a horde of mandrill-faced hobgoblins in **The Official Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Coloring Album**. Saxon violence, Gregor-style:

in **Abdul Mati Klarwein's God Jokes** [paperbound, 1976, Harmony Books]. I was first exposed to Klarwein's paintings via the Miles Davis albums **Bitches' Brew** and **Live/Evil**, so this collection came as a welcome opportunity to further explore his meticulous portraits of mystical mergers of people and places, emotions and events, riddles and enigmas...there are no proper words to describe **God Jokes**. Klarwein's meager text echoes the same teasing sense of a prankster, voodoo-priest that is at work in his colorful pictures. Some may find it elusive and frustrating, while others will find themselves embracing this crafty trickster's sorcery. An earlier autobiographical Klarwein volume, **Milk N'Honey** [1973, Harmony Books], might also show itself in the bookstacks...

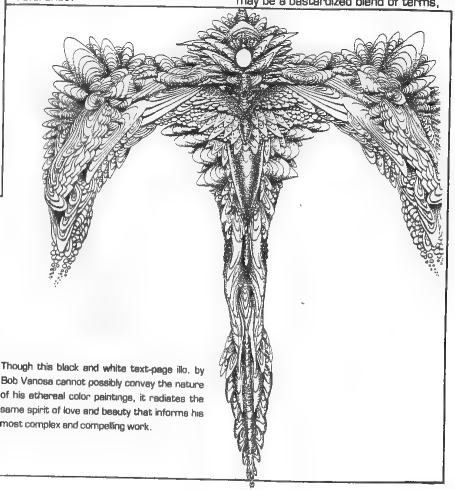
Two big handsome hardbacks offer some of the most striking depictions of wildlife you're ever likely to come across, short of photobooks or, better yet, taking the time to lay still in a stretch of woods long enough to see 'em in the flesh.

The Worlds of Ernest Thompson Seton [Edited by John G. Samson, 1976, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.] provides a stunning example from the works of **Seton**, which included innumerable sketches, journals, diaries, paintings, and a legacy of published books [**Wild Animals I Have Known**, **Lives of the Hunted**, etc.] which he wrote and illustrated. A lavish book, the finest imaginable introduction to Seton's lifework you'll ever find, or, if you're already familiar with Seton's talents, an excellent binding of his scribblings and rarely-seen watercolors and oil renderings of our country's natural citizens in action. Artsests and aspiring artseats take note: Seton's drawings provide, without a doubt, the best available reference for the anatomy of North American animals. Study his drawings, or swipe if you must, but definitely check him out. If you're really interested, scope out a copy of Seton's **Art Anatomy of Animals** [1977, Running Press, Philadelphia; $7.95 — and not, to my knowledge, available on the sale shelves of any bookstore] for an exhaustive [though academic and dryly diagramatic] reference.

All of Seton's books feature "marginal" line drawings like this one on nearly every page.

The other big beauty comes from the Dutch fellow who illustrated the best-seller **Gnomes**, **Rien Poortvliet**. It's entitled, **The Living Forest**, [1979, Abrams, Inc.] accurately enough, for his animals do indeed live; Poortvliet, like Seton, is a naturalist whose ability to not only portray his furry and feathered subjects, but to actually capture that spark of life in each of them, is uncanny. The book's information is laid out in the 'offhand' notebook-quality of **Gnomes** and Fairies, with text and illos tightly integrated within the book's spacious format. There is nothing 'offhand' about the watercolor mastery of Rien Poortvliet, though.

Here's a real oddity: **The Ad-Maze**, subtitled "A photographic excursion into the dreams of an adman", as "created and photographed" by **Pat Galanti** [hardcover, 1968, A.S. Barnes and Co., London]. It's a graphic-novel length fumetti [that may be a bastardized blend of terms,



Though this black and white text-page illo. by Bob Vanosa cannot possibly convey the nature of his ethereal color paintings, it radiates the same spirit of love and beauty that informs his most complex and compelling work.

Ernest Thompson Seton's masterful pen and ink renditions of North American animal life, whether formal or informal, clinical or cleverly humorous, still seem to breathe...nearly a century after their creation.

but since both "graphic novels" and fumettis are still amorphous terms in the U.S. of A., it'll do for now) that lovingly chronicles the dilemma of one Gil Ford, an advertising art director who goes off the deep end when his latest ad campaign fantasy-figure, a woman he calls Eurasia, becomes an obsession. So Gil, you see, loses touch with 'reality', and thereby hangs the turgid tale, complete with hallucinatory experiences involving umbrellas, diving suits, guitars, wigs, ropes and bondage [no, now, see, there ya go...it's poor ol' Gil who's tied and tortured), and a bevy of models with names like Passionelle and the ilk, [Ilk!) all floundering amidst tacky pop-graphics and lotsa shots of poor Gil's face distorted through lenses. Pat Gelanti and his cast apparently believed in what they were doing, but what can you say about a book that begins with a dedication to 'Eurasia' ends with the words and music to a song written especially for the book entitled — what else? — 'Eurasia'? It's frightening!

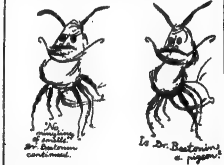
Also hilarious ... a treasure, a thoroughly entertaining and endearing wretched cultural document, in the same vein of THE SLIME PEOPLE, PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE, "Green Acres", and [more to the point] those color newstand fumetti soap-operas [kiss, darling, etc.].

Pass the ketchup...[Urp!]

Another real oddity: **Professor Mmae's Lecture** [hardcover, 1975, Overlook Press] by **Stefan Themerson**, a dense, textural fantasy about life in a maddeningly structured termite society. Rich with direct and indirect observations of our own sexual-socio-political-religious fixations and abberations. Themerson's termite tapestry is by turns obtuse, heavy-handed, and infuriating ... just as it is also amusing, compelling, and occasionally nasty and jarring, almost Kafkaesque in its hallucinatory intensity. Actually, the book echoes Karel Capek more often that Kafka, specifically Capek's **War With the Newts**, though I'll qualify that by saying I found Capek's fantasy, and analogies, more accessible.

What initially attracted me to this book, and what might be of interest to other comic-book folk, is the dustjacket's use of two panels from an old Jack Kirby "Antman" story, along with a textbook schematic illo of my childish fascination: one of Kirby's classic "ant's-eye view" shots, looking up at grotesque human figures, ridiculously distorted proportions to suggest the exaggerated perspective: tiny heads...Titan Hands ... COLOSSAL FEET! Lo and behold, the inside back leaf of the jacket sports a photo of the author with the same up-angle point of view, arms folded and face brooding, Cavernous nostrils and eyelids flaring in the storm. "Hey, this is sharp!", I though, laying down my 49 cents and taking it home to read it... What a weird book! Illustrated with nifty little margin sketches of Zanti-like beings by Fanciska Themerson.

Rudyard Kipling illustrations for **Just So Stories** [hardcover, 1978 edition, Weathervane Books] were new to me, though the stories remain comfortably, their same old selves. No need to talk about Kiplin's marvelous tales; surely many of us grew



A few of Fran Themerson's doodle-bugs which infest the pages of Stefan Themerson's allegorical novel **Professor Mmae's Lecture.**

A hard-hitting moment of stark revelatory indecision and gash-lust op-erta in on turgid tortured dirge-faced Gil, hero of Pat Gelanti's junk-epic fumetti **The Ad-Mass**!!!!!

up listening to 'em, even if we didn't always recognise them as being Kipling's creations. His illustrations, however, do call for some attention: bold pen and ink line drawings, most of them stark and simple, with punchy, direct use of silhouettes and masses of black alongside careful fine-line greys. One in particular, for 'The C at that Walked by Himself', eloquently depicts the story's hero "walking by his wild lone through the Wet Wild Woods and waving his wild tail," a small, self-content black feline strutting into a narrowing perspective of black trees. Another favorite pictures a giant sea-monster that figures in 'The Butterfly That Stamped' ("He was really quite a nice animal, and his Mummy was very fond of him and of his twenty-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine brothers that lived at the bottom of the sea."); yet another is a scraggly mess of a map of "The Turbid Amazon" which Kipling confesses, "Hasn't anything to do with the story except that there are two Armadillos in it — up by the top."

The elegance, innocence, and occasional crudeties of these drawings are intrinsic to their charm, labors of love reflecting all that has made Kipling's 'Just-So Stories' endearing enough to stand the test of time. Needless to say, the drawings also reflect the period of time during which they were drawn: the styles of his contemporaries, touches and motifs of art nouveau, still ring true.

A novel, sans illustrations, that I'd like to heartily recommend to any and all horror movie buffs out there is **The Late Great Creature** by **Brock Brower** (hardcover, 1971, Atheneum; also in paperback), a glorious tribute to the ignobly sappy ends that have dampened the careers of beloved genre stars like Bela, Boris, Vincent, and on and on. Well, rest assured that there is no sappy capper for Brower's fictional horror star, Simon Moro, whose last film echoes the worst of Roger Corman's Poe films. Moro takes the bull by the balls, as it were, and turns the advertising campaign and opening-night publicity into a genuine reign of terror. And thereby hangs the grisly tale, spiced by the meaty details of Moro's career in films and seedy glimpses of his perverse life and lusts.

Along the way, Brower peoples his entourage of Moro's unwilling associates (and victims) with cutting caricatures of Corman, the flit extremes of Vincent Price, Bruce Dern-like character actors, and even Forry Ackerman proteges at their most films, describing his delightful fictional precision that one finds oneself literally aching to catch GHOULGANTUA on late-night television.

All this makes for an obscure but curiously definitive funeral march for the era of horror films that came to a miserable conclusion in the late 1960s, while it also anticipates the opening of the psychic floodgates by the likes of George Romero, Tobe Hooper, David Cronenbert. They and their twisted peers and cinespawn dared to assault and genuinely **frighten** their audiences with the coming of the '70s, in the weke of Hitchcock's PSYCHO, and achievement which left the feeble hysterics of the genre's gothic traditions a'la Corman, Hammer, etc. shivering amid the clink and rattle of chains in the paling Pathecolor shadows of their stock trappings. It's also an often moving piece of writing, with a crazy-quilt cast and design, some savagely hilarious bits of humor, and, above all, Simon Moro, a larger-than-life creation who brings nasty life

to every deviant notion you might have ever entertained about Bela, Vincent or dear old Boris.

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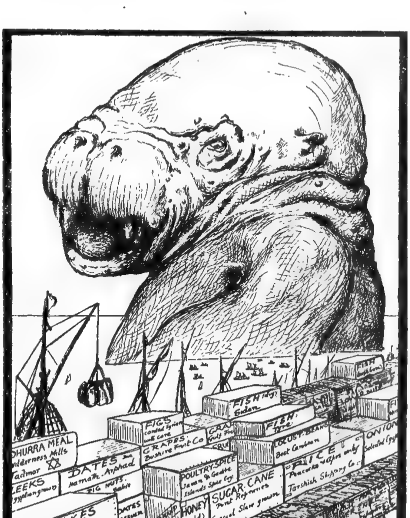
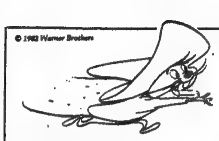
If **you** have any books on shelf or in mind that you think might be in keeping with the tone and content of this column, please, by all means, write us about 'em! **Don't** send the book (unless you don't mind parting with it; we cannot guarantee it's safe arrival or return, sorry to say), but **do** send your comments (briefly, what's the book about, why do you like and recommend it, what makes it unusual, along with title, author, and printing information) and if it's an illustrated or comic format book, you might also enclose some good, crisp, clear copies (Xeroxes, Savins, or whatever) of a few of the more striking illos or graphics in the book(s) you're describing. We will print any and all contributions that prove of interest, and certainly credit them to whosoever writes them, though understand that I reserve the right to refuse, edit, or add my own observations or notations to any submissions. Send them to this column care of this magazine...until next time, happy trails...



When Suleiman-Bin-Daud goes for feeding "all the animals in the world in one day", this greedy lout heaves out of the ocean and scarfs the whole shebang "in three mouthfuls"...one of Kipling's marvelous drawings for the Just-So story "The Butterfly that Stamped".



Animated Antics

by James Van Hise

Cartoons is an art form often misunderstood and maligned. Much of the criticism comes because of what cartoons have become on Saturday morning television. Although the most vocal criticism is over the limited animation, aren't many of those same critics also fans of the old Jay Ward cartoons wherein it didn't matter that the animation was limited? And why didn't it matter? Because of the writing! They were done with wit and style and are still well remembered years later. No, the real problems with Saturday morning cartoons is not the animation, it's the incredibly low level of writing. No one is trying to the sly humor employed in the old Jay Ward cartoons any more wherein story and idea was employed to the exclusion of manifestations of violence (which would make that style fit in perfectly with the iron fisted restrictions imposed by Standards and Practices on Saturday morning cartoons). There is also no one writing now like Michael Maltese (who died a few years ago). Maltese wrote most of the best Chuck Jones cartoons, and if you look closely at Jones work, the creativity seemed to diminish when Maltese stopped working for him and left to write for Hanna-Barbera where he did the early Yogi Bear and quick-Draw McGraw (remember El Kabong?)

But singling out the writing is itself a complex problem because the old Jay Ward cartoons is just one style of writing and cartoons can't exist following just one style (as evidenced by what they're going through now). The singular problem lies with Standards and Practices and what they will and won't allow. There are classic cartoons playing on local TV stations

Wile E. Coyote and The Road Runner. © Warner Brothers Inc.

which would either be banned from Saturday morning TV outright or else severely edited (such as the later Warner Brothers cartoons are now on the **Bugs Bunny/Roadrunner** show). The reason for this is that cartoons were not always made exclusively for children. When made for theatrical showing in the Thirties and Forties, most were written to have a broader appeal, wherein the children would enjoy the superficial qualities while teenagers and adults would pick up on the wise and witty undercurrents. It was the advent of TV that narrowed the focus of cartoons, even to the extent that the Disney features of the past two decades have little to offer adults in the way of creative writing.

But getting back to the restrictions of subject matter on Saturday morning television, I'm sure we all can provide examples of cartoons shown every day locally (i.e. the MGM Tom & Jerry) which would not survive the censor's blade on the network level. Two of my favorite cartoons would never survive, but for two very different reasons, one of which points out the real sadness in the restrictions set down by the Standards and Practices (and their support groups such as Action For Children's Television).

"An Itch In Time" is one of the classic non-series Warner Brothers cartoons. Directed by Bob Clampett and released November 20, 1943, this cartoon has that off-the-wall manic touch which was only occasionally achieved by even such luminaries as Chuck Jones. Even the animation style with its exaggerated takes and frenzied motion makes you feel as though everyone involved was just a little bit insane, but in a highly creative and well focused pattern.

Written by Warren Foster and animated by such notables as Bob McKimson, Ron Scribner and Virgil Ross, this cartoon tells the agonizing tale of a dog beset by a super flea who intends to take up culinary residence on the dog's back while singing, "Food around the corner, food around the corner, there's food around the corner for me!". The best scene in the short is when the flea sets off a mound of explosives on the dog's back and the dog proceeds to run howling around the room, dragging his butt across the floor and suddenly stopping to look square in the camera to state, "I'd better cut this out before I start to like it." This kind of weird, Marx Brothers style one-liner just leaps from the screen and catches the viewer totally off guard. Watching cartoons like this which strived to **avoid** cliche's at any cost is such a welcome relief to what's being tried by anyone today. Aside from the violence in this cartoon, that line alone would send the censors scurrying because of **all** the bizarre implications involved.

This is the kind of style of writing which Standards and Practice could think of allowing on cartoons made for TV today. It's **too** creative, and in a way they would deem unhealthy for young minds. I can well understand that as it certainly warped **me**

growing up in the Sixties watching stuff like that. But it is also something which most cartoons today are not, no matter what they're pretense. It's funny. Forty years after it was made it's funny! And without a laugh track. It's also damn weird, but how many little kids want to watch something that's ordinary? It's kind of hard to try and protect children with animated poblum when among many of them their favorite show is **Benny Hill** (which is shown at the dinner hour in some markets).

And yet the cartoons made now are supposed to have another purpose as well when possible. They are supposed to instruct children; to teach them something useful which they can absorb into their lives. But even this is just a pretense because anything instructive which Standards and Practices thinks might be "upsetting" to a child is immediately quashed. Children are supposed to learn without their little emotions being tweeked in even the mildest way. This is why Dorothy Fontana had to fight to keep her scene in the **Star Trek** animated episode "Yesteryear" wherein the pet of young Spock on Vulcan dies while protecting his master. Children's pet do have a tendancy to die on occasion but even a lesson as mild as this had to be fought for to be retained. Children have emotions but those emotions must not be touched, or so feels Standards and Practices. If some nameless scrivner toiling in the vineyards of Saturday morning television had written a cartoon with the same plot as **E.T.**, it would have been rejected out of hand as being too "Upsetting" to children. It arouses **emotions** and intense **feelings**. Which is why another one of my favorite cartoons will never be seen on Network TV.

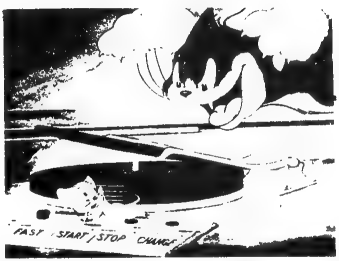
Casper the friendly ghost is not exactly a fan favorite with good reason. Most all of the cartoons have

the same plot – Casper trying to make friends but everyone is scared of him. "A g-g-g-g-g-ghost!!!" goes the inevitable refrain time after time, with only small children and other innocents understanding his charms. But one of the early cartoons stands above the others by going further and telling a very rewarding story which is not unlike E.T. in many respects, including the emotional payoff.

"There's Good Boo's Tonite" was released in April 1948 and is the second Casper cartoon. The first was shown recently nationwide on the PBS series, "Matinee at the Bijou" and ended with Casper dressed up like a child going off to school with the other children in a family he's just helped. It tends to beg the question, "Yeah, but who was Casper when he was alive?"

This second Casper outing opens with announcer Frank Gallop leading the veiwer into a cemetery so that it seems like we're about to see a horror cartoon! It's quite an effective opening and the animation headed by Myron Waldman, Morey Reden and Nick Tafuri is top notch all the way, and amazingly so. And yet this is a Paramount cartoon, produced at their Famous Studios which is what remained of the studio established there by the Reischer brothers before they were ousted. Released as a Paramount Noveltoon, it's directed by I. Sparber and written by Bill Turner and Larry Riley and this is where the magic really comes into play. To the accompanying music of Winston Sharples, a gentle yet affecting story unfolds of Casper failing to make any friends until he encounters a little fox. They hit it off famously and to make it even more realistic the fox is like a real little animal in that he can't talk. Then enter the hunters. While Casper is distracted by something else, the huge hunters with their mammoth guns appear on horseback, chasing after the fox and blasting away at him for all that they're worth until finally Casper appears and admonishes them, whereupon the hunters and horses scream and run away. Seems typical so far, doesn't it? But Casper finds out that he was too late! He finds his little friend, but the fox is dead. Weeping piteously, Casper digs a grave and buries the little fox, on camera, and then sits crying over the grave. By now one can imagine a theatre filled with hysterical children shrieking over the demise of the friendly little fox who was the only friend Casper ever had. They are not crying any more heavily than Casper is as he's really going at it. And then it happens. The ghost of the little fox emerges from the grave and he and Casper are reunited, for eternity.

It's a very effective and moving animated performance but I'm afraid that Standards and Practices would fear that children would wind up trying to give themselves Bic pen lobotomies during the crucial emotional climax. And yet this is one of the most wonderful and affecting cartoons I've ever seen. It reaches out to touch the viewer and succeeds admirable, and who could ever even consider that a



Early version of Tom and Jerry, as they appeared in PUSS 'N' TOOTS (1942). © Loews Inc. Ren. 1967 MGM.

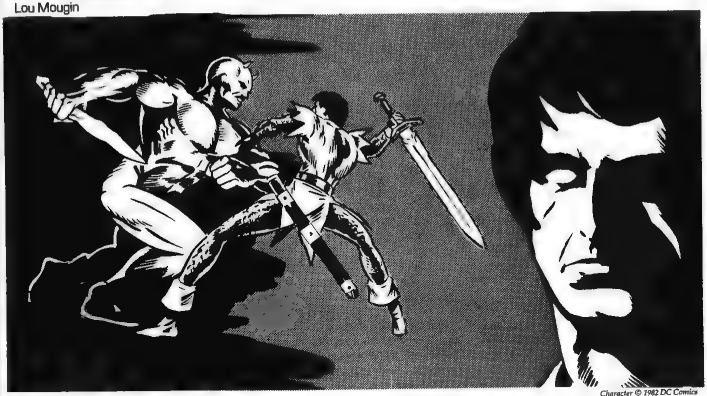
child watching this would grow up wanting to be a hunter? This cartoon works on many levels.

So although it's easy to dismiss Saturday morning cartoon fare out of hand as being crude, badly written and mindless, it remains a controlled mindlessness; an intended intellectual vacuum wherein true creativity is gagged and bound while talented people toil away turning out what they know full well is garbage because they are allowed to do no other. True humor and cleverness is deemed too anti-social for children while stories with emotional contact are considered too "upsetting" and would cause "problems". Thus all that remains is an inarticulate wasteland which in its pursuit of vapid entertainment does more harm to children than all the things that Standards and Practices are attempting to shield them from.

Feeling sadness over someone's death is not a negative emotion, even if tears are involved. It's a cleansing, a catharsis wherein tensions and anxieties are faced and released so that we feel good afterwards. It's a positive experience and certainly more uplifting than the mind-numbing antics of Scooby Doo, the Smurfs or Pac-Man. By following their present course, which doesn't even allow cartoons the same latitude demonstrated in the live-action programming shown in the same time periods, all that Action for Childrens Television and the rest of them are doing are producing children who don't want to think. There's room for all kinds of children's entertainment on Saturday morning. To limit to those things arbitrarily deemed "safe" for certain age groups is to ultimately limit the children themselves. By its very nature animation can explore realms difficult to enter in live action but instead its being restricted to areas more boring and less challenging than even the cheapest and most poorly produced sit-com. Saturday has become worse even then the PTA ever feared it would become. It's become dull, and instead of brightening minds with ideas and imagination and visual delights, its deadening them with recycled cliche s and boring "adventures." There is no thrill in anything being done there thrills would imply that the viewers were engaging their emotions and we'll have none of that!

FORGOTTEN SUPERHEROES

Lou Mougin



Character © 1982 DC Comics

Practically the only sword-and-sorcery superstar to make it big in comics is the original, Conan. Most of this can be laid at the feet of Roy Thomas, who simply refused to give up on the brawny barbarian through thick and thin in the early days, until Conan became a major money-maker for the industry. It spawned a batch of imitators, and most of them are well-forgotten...Kull, Kong, Claw, Thongor, and probably even Red Sonja if we're honest enough.

There **were** a couple, though, who truly deserved to make it. They came from DC, a more businesslike house who put the parties out of their misery when they failed to catch on big in the marketplace. One of these books was **Sword and Sorcery**, wherein master craftsman Denny O'Neil and his crony Howard Chaykin adapted entertainingly the tongue-in-cheek heroics of Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. They didn't have the violent charisma of Conan or the moody appeal of Elric, and so most comic buffs have left this one unread; 'tis a pity indeed.

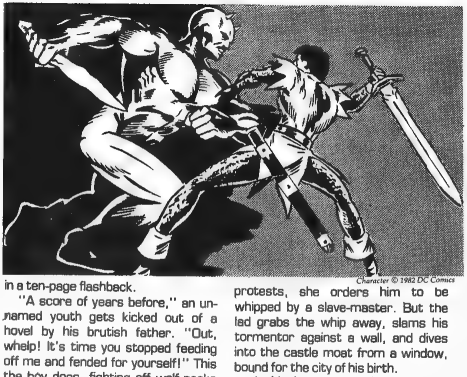
The second book was **Stalker**.

It lasted all of four issues, and kicked off with a tense and eerie cover in which the black-haired, medievally-costumed Stalker, his eyes a mass of solid red, stood with his back to a wall, his sword thrust defensively before him, while an unseen antagonist who threw a horrific shadow on the wall approached with blades clutched in his iron-gloved hands.

The art was the work of Steve Ditko and Wally Wood. Together, they were the best-matched pair since Jack Kirby and Joe Sinnott. They'd worked together since 1966, Ditko countering Wood's photographic staticness, Wood tempering Ditko's imagination with hard-edged reality, and, as a team, they were responsible for the extra edge of Stalker's quality.

But **Stalker** had more than good art. It had good writing, with a well-wrought antihero, an interesting and imaginative setting, and a truly original plot-gimmick: the hero was searching for his own stolen soul.

Fade in on issue #1, dated June-July 1975. Stalker, a wiry, muscular youth clad in gold mail and green tunic and boots, ascends a rope tied to the top of a watchtower on Castle Loranth dispatches the lone guard with a knife-thrust, and enters the castle. He pauses on a balcony overlooking a banquet hall and lets fly with another knife, this one bearing a message tied about its haft: it slams into a wooden chair-back just inches from the face of Baroness Loranth, an aristocratic beauty. She unravels the message, which promises her death one year in the future. Stalker watches from behind a curtain, and remembers his origin



Character © 1982 DC Comics

in a ten-page flashback.

"A score of years before," an unnamed youth gets kicked out of a hovel by his brutish father. "Out, whelp! It's time you stopped feeding off me and fended for yourself!" This the boy does, fighting off wolf-packs with a wooden club for a piece of meat, scarfing up garbage from desert caravans, thieving from shopkeepers in the city. "And with better times, came dreams of better worlds ..." or, more plainly put, daydreams of becoming a heroic knight of the realm, rescuing beautiful princesses from marauding dragons. As any veteran comic-reader knew, the kid was going to have his chance to make good, and it came one panel later.

A woman, the selfsame Baroness of a few pages before, is being carried through the slum streets on a litter. The youthful thief holds up progress long enough to petition the lady for a chance to become a knight-in-training for her person. "You shall have your chance, oh nameless warrior-to-be!" pronounces the woman. "There is always room for one more at Castle Loranth—especially for one more slave!"

Young Stalker follows the Baroness to the castle, but instead of learning the ways of warfare, he's put to work scrubbing floors, hauling trash and shouldering ale-barrels. For a bunk he gets a niche in the storeroom; his repast is a bowl of gruel, taken in the sight of the huge dinners fed on by the Baroness and her guests. In short, the Middle-Class Dreamer meets the Middle-Class Reality. When the boy protests, she orders him to be whipped by a slave-master. But the lad grabs the whip away, slams his tormentor against a wall, and dives into the castle moat from a window, bound for the city of his birth.

In his home town, he visits the churchly district where the temples of a thousand gods reside. "Hah! A thousand gods...each as omnipotent as the next! Not a one's brought me but ill! Still, I suppose I've never tried, and if warrior I wish to be, then I should offer my prayer to the demon lord of warriors...**Dgrth!**" Not a bad idea. Dgrth (pronounced Dgrth) appears, all armor, horns, spikes, brass knuckles and pointed teeth of him, and makes the kid an offer he can't refuse: "I'll grant you — power — skill — all the arts of killing men ever wished for! You'll become the living messenger of death — the most invincible foe this world has known!" With the theme from **Patton** playing in the background, the boy swears obeisance. "I give you the art of combat...I bestow the eye of a marksman — with any weapon! ... And I grant the gift of the hunter — to follow any trail, undiscovered and unhampered. From that I give you your name, **Stalker** — and ask you if you will hunt for those I seek — and kill those I doom!" "I'll pay any price you name!" gushes Stalker. "Even your immortal soul?" queriest Dgrth, finger pointing. "Granted! I'll not need it when I'm dead, anyway," says Stalker, agreeably.

With that, Dgrth clenches his fist, and Stalker's soul — a man-shaped silhouette with the pliable dimensions of Plastic Man — rises fourth from the boy's body. His eyes become two red slits. He wishes for revenge, and goes back to Castle Loranth to get it.

Which brings us up to the present again.

As Stalker watches, he's approached from behind by the former slave-master, toting a sword. He disarms his former liege and then tosses him bodily to his death below. As the Baroness gapes, Stalker descends his rope, and breaks for freedom. Yes, all is not as planned: "Here I've begun my revenge—tasted a foe's blood for the first time — and it all feels hollow! No joy, no relief — no victory! As if I had no more emotions than a stone! This is not what I agreed to!" He enters a local temple of Dgrth. There he meets a priest, whom he knocks into a pit of flame in a duel, just after he finds out that the only one who knows where Dgrth is is a priest in a temple at the World's End Sea. "When you get there, tell Dgrth he has something that belongs to me...and I'm coming to get it back!" Our hero rides off into the shadows, while a banner proclaims that next issue shall feature "Darkling Death At World's End Sea!"

Stalker #1 was done. It had established an interesting premise for a hero, and both script and art jived up to high-quality standards. Moreover, there was a world to be explored, and it differed from our own enough to provide an interesting saga in itself.

In the beginning of **Starker** #2, Stalker and his white steed threaded a treacherous bridge of stone towards a small islet near the edge of World's End Sea. On this planet, Columbus would have been wrong...the world was flat, and you could fall over the edge. Hence the name "world's Edge Sea." And, after fighting off one demonic guard and faking his way inside Dgrth's Temple with a group of worshippers, Stalker was discovered and, after a fight, subdued. In prison, awaiting execution, the hero meets a blonde lovely named Merille, who gives him a dagger. When he is taken by guards at dawn to be carved up on an alter of sacrifice, he bolts upon learning that Dgrth

won't be attending the ceremony. After freeing Merilla, Stalker sets the priest to spinning eternally on the Wheel of Death. Then he sets the lady astride his own horse and sleps it away, leaving Shane-fashion in a small sailboat for the Burning Isle, his next stop.

Issue #3, "The Freezing Flames of the Burning Isle!", opened with a rousing sea-battle against a winged demon with lightning accentuating the conflict. Stalker, swept overboard, washed up on the aforementioned Burning Isle, where he met an exiled beauty (there are no ugly women in sword-and-sorcery, unless they're aged crones) named Srani, who is suspected of being a witch. She proves to be such, and, after Stalker battles a passel of demons, he defeats her and wins clear to a gateway leading to Dgrth's realm. It ended there, and the devoted Stalker-fan tuned in next time for issue #4, the final episode, "Invade the Inferno!"

Stalker battled his way through guardians, imps, animated skeletons, dragons and sheer nothingness in the sword-and-sorcery scenes which Ditko always draws so well (and check his tales of s & s in early Warrens if you don't believe it), and finally led Dgrth's own damned army against him in a war of demons. Finally, he entered Dgrth's own Sanctum Sanctorum, where he jawboned with the king of hell himself: "You said that they (the powers given to him) would cost me my soul — but not that you would take it while I still lived! You took it — and left me but the shell of a man!" To which Dgrth replied, "You have caused such trouble that I should take your life, not give you anything! But gladly would I return your soul to be rid of that army of the damned... only I cannot!" Once taken, the soul could not be returned. Only Dgrth's death could free Stalker from his bondage, and that could only happen when none believed in Dgrth.

"I shall devote my life to you death!" snapped Stalker, holding a sword-point to his liege's throat. "Let those who would worship you beware...for they have not long to live!" Dgrth agreed: "Slay all who serve me before they slay you — for if it is you who dies, you will be damned, and in my power! And I promise you the most painful damnation in the eons-long history of hell!" Laughing, Dgrth banishes Stalker, transporting him back to the island surrounding the gate to hell. Lifting his sword to the heavens, Stalker cries, "I shall do the impossible and banish evil from this world — my soul shall yet be mine!"

That's where it ended, and the Stalker saga was never resumed. If we can believe the letters pages, the people who actually read **Stalker** became hardcore supporters, and clamored for a revival after its cancellation. But **Stalker's** circulation was too poor for DC to consider revival and the book was dropped, along with its companions **Sword of Sorcery**, **Kong**, **Rima**, **Claw** and everything else in DC's s & s line except the perennial **Warlord**. With the wholesale revivalism going on in DC's back-feature pages in 1978-1980, one could have expected a Stalker comeback, but Paul Levitz made a public declaration that the character was dead in a **Detective Comics** lettercol — maybe due to the difficulty of reuniting Ditko and Wood — and that was that.

Still, **Stalker** was an excellent book. It derived its fantasy mainly from the Moorcockian branch of heroics, rather than the bullying bluster of Howard, and it was as interesting a venture into heroic fantasy as anyone had tried this side of Roy Thomas. If Levitz had fought for it with the tenacity that Thomas defended Conan, **Stalker** might have trekked on for years to come. But the instability of Ditko and Wood performing together would sooner or later have lead to one or both departing, and the heady mixture would have been adulterated. So, in retrospect, it's probably a good thing **Stalker** only lasted for four issues. But it's a safe bet that any sword-and-sorcery fan who wants thrills beyond **Conan the Barbarian** will not be disappointed by these issues!

Stalker index:
#1, June-July 1975 Cover: Ditko/Wood "Quest For a Stolen Soul" (18) Levitz/Ditko/Wood

#2, August-September 1975 Cover: Ditko/Wood "Darkling Death at World's End Sea" (18) Levitz/Ditko/Wood

#3, October-November 1975 Cover: Ditko/Wood "The Freezing Flames of the Burning Isle" (18) Levitz/Ditko/Wood

#4, December 1975-January 1976 Cover: Ditko/Wood "Invade the Inferno" (18) Levitz/Ditko/Wood

FIRST YEAR KUBIE-
MY GREATEST ADVENTURE

1976-1983. And counting. The Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art has continued to grow and flourish. It began with a handful of students and a very few dedicated cartoonists-turned-instructors.

There was a planned two-year curriculum, talk of guest speakers and field trips and in-house work projects...but no one then knew for certain where the hell it was all leading.

Kubert himself was possessed of an infectious optimism. Most of us were touched by Joe's enthusiasm and by day we soaked in the words and ideas and information. We proceeded to sweat out our excitement in the form of prodigious amounts of work assignments and frequent extracurricular activities.

By night the optimism was tempered by our singular realities. We didn't have the security of a good editorial position as Kubert did. Many of us lived thousands of miles away from our respective homes. We had no loving families to return at the end of each long day. Some students had entered this college prep level school right out of high school, completely unprepared for the level of energy or mountain of work that was required to merely get by from week to week.

A few of us spent most or all of our savings to attend Joe's school. We could look ahead to the next year or even next semester and only wonder where the tuition and rent money would come from. Financial shortcomings claimed several promising artists by the end of the first year.

I was so happy to return home to be reunited with my wife and infant son that I didn't long wallow in self-pity at my embarrassment of funds or my lack of immediate success.

The separation from family, the tightness of funds, the tremendous demands made on our time and abilities were all factors that were integral parts of the madness that added up to the first year of existance of Kubert's school...and my first and only year as a 'Kubie' student.

I stepped off the American Airlines flight in a place called Newark, New Jersey. The long, leisurely trip from Green Bay to the East Coast had covered more ground, but the remaining shuttle and bus and taxi trips and transfers were more harrowing to the novice traveler. From Newark through a tunnel which burrowed underneath a river to the Port Authority in New York City, then back out through the tunnel on a slow Greyhound to a small town in the very center of Northern New Jersey. Dover was my destination, and the taxi took me across town to a quiet suburban section about ½ mile from Interstate 80. Forty-five Lehigh Street was a sight to behold. The 'school' was a converted three-story mansion on a lush estate. Immaculate lawns and shrubs and trees surrounded the place, which loomed down from the top of gentle slope. Inside, workers were still busy sawing and nailing and cleaning. School was due to open in about a month and the finished results were not yet evident. A man approached me. I immediately recognised him from his self-portrait in **DC Special #5**. Joe Kubert was a living incarnation of Sgt. Rock. Although he was a shade under six feet, his stocky build and rugged, healthy good looks made him appear as large in life as any super-hero he had drawn. Kubert was about fifty years old in 1976, but he looked only about 40 and had the strength of a young man. He was instantly likeable, with his easy smile and hearty, physical manner.

Joe himself was the best advertisement for his yet-to-open school. After glancing through my portfolio and deeming it promising, Kubert leaned forward and described the things he hoped to accomplish. He was a product of the old studio system that had packaged entire comic books, from story to art, back in the early days of the business. As a teenager he had been willing to sweep floors and run for coffee, just to rub elbows and hobnob with working cartoonists. The closeknit experience was heady stuff for the young aspiring artist. Joe learned quick and was soon turning out work himself for various companies. The early work was crude and cluttered, but charged with vitality, like the man himself. That he had gone far since, was apparent.

Beyono the necessity of the structured classes and curriculum, Joe wanted to bring back the atmosphere of the old studio set-up; young, untried talents thrown together and learning from each other, as well as the teaching staff, made up of working professionals who would make themselves available as often as possible to eager students.

As far as Joe was concerned, my work was fine and I was welcome to sign up for the duration. Even then my position was precarious. I could only scrape together enough money for the first year's tuition, with some left over for room and board. The carriage house of the mansion contained servants' quarters on the second floor, and these were also being converted to house out-of-state students. For me, commuting was out of the question.

It would have been simple to say 'no' to the whole thing. My wife and I had just had our first child two months before, and everyone told me that I would be crazy to leave them behind. But I didn't much care what other

people thought of me. I had my wife's love and total support, and that was all I wanted. I'd have to watch my budget at all times, but money seemed a poor reason to give up on such a special opportunity. This was the kind of chance that gets thrown in your lap - perhaps once in a lifetime. If I waited past the first year, family obligations and job responsibilities would prevent me from ever getting out this way again. Worst of all, I imagined myself turning into a bitter old man while still in my twenties, cursing my missed opportunity and forever lamenting over what 'might have been'.

I had been dabbling in art for most of my life and talking about being a comic artist, for real, since I was a kid. Self-teaching had only brought me so far. There was a lot I had to learn before I could even think of playing in the big leagues. My various accomplishments as a television artist and freelance artist back in Green Bay didn't mean so much at this point.

What it boiled down to was not money or family separation or distance or anything else I could make up to stumble over. What it boiled down to was...Could I go through this experience and still be prepared to **fail?**

The last month passed all too quickly. I said my goodbyes to friends and family. Everyone was too shocked at my sudden decision to try to talk me out of it. The only thing that concerned me at the point was the state of my marriage. Lynn and I had only wed 1½ years before and had only met six months before that. Everything between us had happened so quickly, I felt that we knew too little about each other. And my son Jake was only three months old. Nine months of his developing and learning to walk and talk would be denied me. That was perhaps my biggest sacrifice. I told myself that if I could survive that, I was strong enough to take anything.

En route, the bus I was taking to Milwaukee arrived too late for me to catch my train. Holed up in Beer City overnight, I had one mad moment where I thought I'd chuck everything and just come home. No one at school knew me or would think anything of it, and everybody back home would think that I'd come to my senses at last. I telephoned Lynn and explained my predicament. Though I broke down in tears upon hearing her voice, she also gave me a kind of strength. She was my rock, absolutely dependable. I knew in my heart that she would be back there at home, waiting for me. I was able to look forward, to a year and a crazy living that I could not imagine.

Damn the train and that travel agent! I switched to an airplane, and was able to arrive in Dover on Sunday, September 7, the night before my first class. The school was closed so I made my way to the carriage house and my sleeping accomodations.

The roomates I met were in the middle of a party, letting off steam with booze and loud noise. Weary and uncommunicative, I said my hellos and hit the sack. I didn't get a helluva lot of sleep.

September 8, 1976: The Beginning. Daylight gave me my first good look at my roomies and the students who drove in from surrounding towns. Half the class was from New Jersey, a couple of whom elected to live on-campus. Two guys were from California, one lady was from Nevada, another pair hailed from Vermont, while one was from Illinois, not far from my stomping grounds in Wisconsin.

It was easy going to the first day, a regular orientation. We picked out the drawing boards we wanted, scattered as they were through three small rooms. Mine was an easy choice. The brand new board was by itself in the corner just away from the others...but it was also just across the hall from Kubert's office. It was my way of keeping a distance and keeping up with what was going down, at the same time.

The students were all new faces, though I had heard of Rick Veitch before. He and his brother Tom had published an underground comic book some time back. The faculty was very familiar to me by reputation. Besides Kubert, we were introduced to Ric Estrada—At the time, his work was very visable at DC Comics; Lee Elias—I knew his work from years ago, but only just returned from a decade-long stay in England, his art was beginning to show up again at DC and soon at Marvel; Henry Boltinoff—his gag pages had graced many a DC comic in the sixties and before, I had occasionally spotted a Stoker and Broker cartoon by him in the business section of my newspaper. Dick Giordan—I admired his editorial abilities at Charlton and DC back in the sixties, and his talent was growing a penciller and inker on a ton of current projects. Hy Eisman—the name rang a bell but it took a rundown of his career to clear up my questions about him, he had worked in comic books and strips, mostly as a ghost, but was currently the artist of the Little Iodine sunday strip. Kelly Harris—I knew her then only as the wife of DC editor/writer Jack C. Harris, she was working as a background assistant for some comic artist but would be teaching us basic paste-up and mechanicals.

An informal party was held at noon on the grounds. Strangers began to take hesitant steps toward making friends. The mood among staff and students was slightly strange but generally warm and optimistic. This **was** a day and an occasion to be celebrated, I allowed. It was also my twenty-second birthday. No one knew. The information was not offered.

Today belonged to Joe Kubert and the birth of his new school.

Work was overwhelming. That is the overriding memory of my school experience. Each teacher assigned us exercises in problem-solving that involved countless, exhausting hours of thinking, planning and execution. We longed for the lectures to end so that we could use the remaining classtime to work. The school remained open through the late afternoon and a few of the commuters stayed at their desks, working. Each weekend would find some leisure time reluctantly set aside to get in more time at the drawing board.

There was no firm structure to what was taught or how much time

was set aside for different activities because the whole experience was one unusual "work-in-progress". Kubert had fait in our ambition and in the vast stores of knowledge that his assembled staff possessed. But this sort of school had never been done before. Some art schools offerred cartooning courses as part of thier curriculum. People like Dick Giordano and Lee Elias had taught such electives at prestigious institutions in the New York City area.

Joe's school was about the study of and training of cartoon and graphic art. Period. New ground was being broken every day as students and teachers met. Kubert had the wisdom not to set down in granite from day one 'the way things would be done.' No one yet knew what worked and what didn't, what needed expanding or editing. During each lecture a tape recorder was kept running, collecting what each teacher had to say about his subject, the questions and answers that would follow.

Sometime later, Kubert would have to listen to these tapes and try to put it all together. By the second year, things would be more structured. Students and teachers would then know exactly what would have to be covered, in a more efficient use of time. Even then, Joe decided that two years was not a sufficient period to assimilate all that needed to be known. He would subsequently increase the schooling to a three-year curriculum. Every student body that followed ours would learn longer and hopefully, better, at the expense of our floundering.

Ken Feduniewicz came up with the term 'QB', short for Kubie, or a student of Joe's school..I almost immediately came up with 'XQB', as early on a student here or there could not hack the rigors of cartooning and dropped out by mid-semester. Ken and I were roommates, fans of some of the same artist/heroes, and fellows insomniacs. Our friends and fellow students handled the stress of long hours and crushing responsibilities in different ways. A few lucky ones closed up their portfolios at the end of each day and forgot all about until the next morning. Others turned in on themselves, not sharing their feelings with anyone and gradually losing some grasp of reality, as warped as it was at the school. Still others partied almost every night, sedating themselves with whatever was fashionable at the time, and dropping off into a deep drugged slumber. Kenny and I escaped the partying and neurotics by walking the streets of small-town New Jersey late at night. We discovered the Traveler's Inn, a decent restaurant that was open twenty-four hours a day. The burgers, fries and Cokes were reasonable.

Kenny was a tough-talking "Joisey"kid, a few years older than me, who told me just about everything in a steady, knowing way. I was a naive Wisconsin boy who was living Out-East and away from home for the first time. The two of us were very different types, but we were each very opinionated, and talking and arguing was our special way of letting off steam.

We saw beyond the time frame of school as it was at that moment. We discussed the people we admired, how history and people like Joe had combined to make the school a reality. There were the comic book 'shops' of yesteryear, there was the student group growing and developing each day at school, and there was the exciting future for us and the fledgling institution. Over each midnight snack at the Traveler's, we examined the way the scheme of things was being played out. Was it all really working for us? When would we be snatched up for jobs in an industry that obviously need us? How soon would these in-house work projects Joe promised us come in, so that we could do professional work and earn some much-needed cash? Which teachers were valuable and which would (or should) be replaced? Some of the students had already left...which ones did we thing were the next to fold up?

Which were sure to make it big in comics? We talked into the wee hours because we knew we were in over our heads, in a strange alien environment, and talking and analyzing and naming names was our own way of making sense out of it all.

More than assuaging our own doubts, we felt strongly about the school and what Joe was trying to do. The success of the place and its students would have far-reaching implications for a business where old pros were dying off and too many new entries didn't know how to plot a story or draw a figure. Joe's school, with the right raw talent working in the best possible atmosphere, could be another Eisner shop, another EC-type spawing ground, the shore from whence the best and the brightest would sail into future artistic fame and fortune.

We were the school's toughest critics because we wanted it to work so badly. If you can **love** a thing, that is what we felt for that institution.

A couple of the students had left early-on because they realised that this just wasn't for them. Then Larry Nibert left at the end of the first semester. He had been the odds-on favorite to succeed in the business. He came into the school with a near-professional slick inking style. He was also a pretty good writer and penciller. Looking at his portfolio samples, a few of us realised how much catching up we had to do to be this good.

Nibert was impatient, though. He had wanted to get hired in mid-term, we guessed. He learned as much as he thought he needed to know, and didn't want to waste any more time or money with study. When it was clear that that was not about to happen, he pulled out abruptly and returned to Ohio. For most of the students his 'defection' was something new to consider.

Some began to look ahead to June and wonder if a second year was either financially possible, or whether they wanted to pursue this vocation any further. A few disgruntled students lost faith in their chances and began to spin their wheels, missing assignments and taking less interest in lectures and notes. They had finally looked up from their drawing boards and realised that they were not going to have jobs handed to them. Part of professionalism was not just the ability to draw well, but the need to work proficiently and turn out quality work, while meeting deadlines. I knew something of these from my freelancing back home, but in

the heat of learning and catch-up and extra-curricular work projects, I found that I had to set new goals and work harder than ever to be a true professional.

Then the teachers began to drop out.

It wasn't a big thing at first. One faculty member felt that he wasn't giving the students the kind of information they desired. The kids had made that clear to Joe, and the teacher decided to turn the class over to Hy Eisman, who was eminently qualified to teach almost any subject in the world of cartooning or commercial art. We could adjust to that change.

Then, before Christmas, we learned that Lee Elias was not going to return. He was strong-willed, opinionated, with definite ideas about the relationship between himself as teacher and we student. Indeed, Elias had the most experience of any on the faculty in the game of teaching, and Joe had approached Lee on more than one occasion for advice and support. Some of what went into the founding of that institution was the result of ideas of Lee as offered to Kubert.

I thought of Joe as the brain and brawn behind his incredible venture. I thought of Lee as the heart of the school. His departure was devastating to me. Most of the students took this in stride. The work and the deadlines did not allow one much time to look up and see who was there and who had left. Only a few of us had stayed up with Lee at night and listened to him philosophize about all manner of subjects. He cared less that we become prolific and technically slick craftsmen, and stressed that we become good people within, the better to survive a sometimes cruel and faceless business.

Above all others, Lee was the teacher who was not afraid to tell us where he had gone wrong. He had learned by the mistakes made during a 35-year old career, and he was more than willing to share what he had learned with his young, untried pupils. Which number brush to use and which panel to lay out were but a small part of what he wanted to teach. Develop honesty, integrity, professionalism, pride in your work and belief in yourself...that will serve you well should you decide that you want to continue in cartooning. Should you switch to another profession, though it has nothing to do with the arts...those values should still stay with you.

Though to the reader this may sound like basic high school philosophy, it was very much a contrast to the main thrust of the curriculum of the school at that time. After hours of classes stressing how-to and when-to and drawing and inking and coloring and lettering, there was very great need to remember the humanity, the personality behind the job and the individual.

After all the technically-oriented classes and long periods of simply losing oneself in a stack of assignments, Lee's slant on things meant a lot, at least to this struggling student.

Now he was gone. There was but a semester left to complete. Assignments had to be completed, porfolios filled, in order to even continue to the second year.

Time and money were running out for me. There were carrots being dangled: Rick Estrada like my work and considered using me as an assistant; Dick Giordano always had assistants, maybe with a little work; Joe had provided some professional jobs that were done in-house under his supervision. They had brought in a little cash but it was not enough. He talked of a pool of talent remaining at the school, working under him on a regular basis. I was considered qualified for that group. I had taught special Saturday classes for weekend students, perhaps I might be of service in that capacity. If only, perhaps, maybe...it all depended on my being able to stay just a bit longer, trying my utmost to come back that second year. Things would happen then, I was assured, and I and a few others would be a big part of it.

It was too late for me. It was too soon for Kubert. I was broke. I had to go home and start building a life with my family. Joe's school would have to go through more growing pains before things could run more smoothly. At that crucial crossroads in May of 1977, Kubie U and I went separate way.

I was busy as soon as I got home. Old contacts from former jobs had branched out in different directions and were looking for that artist kid they remembered to do work for them. Green Bay suddenly looked like a garden of opportunity for this eager feelancer. Looking forward and hunching over my drawingboard kept me from looking back to Dover Days and remembering...too much.

Another May came. Word was sent. I was invited to the graduation ceremonies and celebration of my former fellow students. I had heard very little from them as they struggled through their second year. They had had to work even harder than during Year One; there was a whole new batch of students and a few new teachers to contend with. Ken Feduniewicz, my old friend and another one-year XQB, stopped up at the school occasionally and kept me informed through letters and phone calls. A lot of things had changed.

Though I felt ill at ease and wondered if I shouldn't just leave the past behind, I wanted to go back, one last time. I had gone through a lot with the majority of the students there. It would be good to honor these friends in their moment of glory. This time, I would be able to view things from the outside.

It was nice, and it was strange. I had gone far in the last year to establish by own freelance art business. I was no longer a young, scared kid. I found it hard to relate to the classroom experience, the give and take between students and teacher. Joe's dream was no longer mine.

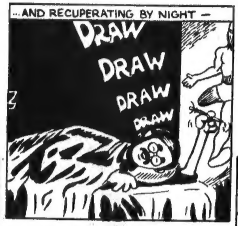
The school's style was harder, more regimented. All the mistakes had been made the first year in order to implement the smoother operation of the second year. I understood that at first some of the students had rebelled at the sudden switch in mood and method. Lee, Ken and I had predicted this to come about but not many had listened. The rebellion did not last long. The word was given; a different kind of school was in evidence from then on.

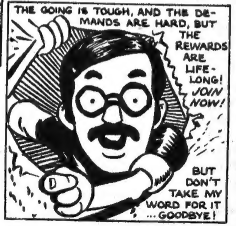
In a way, I was glad that I had bugged out while the bugging was good. I would have had an awful time adjusting to the things that were coming about. I am a big 'principle' guy, and I know I would have had to compromise my principles all over the place, in order to 'succeed' at Kubie U.

There were some genuinely nice moments during those couple of final days I spent with my friends in Dover, New Jersey. I had believed strongly that people like Tom Yeates, Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch would go on to bigger and better things. They were well on their way at graduation time. Rick Taylor and I took the subways to Flushing for a last personal visit with Lee Elias. Seeing him again in the flesh made me realise how sorely missed he was at the school. He was irreplacable and Kubie U was all the poorer without him.

At graduation that night, besides the diplomas and speeches and toasts, teacher Ric Estrada wanted to give his students something extra as a token of his regard. He unveiled a stack of his original art and told the men and women to take samples as a 'Bonus' of sorts. This kind and generous gift was made all the more special by the fact that Ric approached Kenny and me,...visiting dropouts...and made us aware that we were included as part of that illustrious group...in his eyes at least. For a brief moment all was new and fresh and exciting again, as in the beginning. As Estrada autographed my page of original art, I smiled both inwardly and outwardly. Deep down, despite all the pressures and hard feelings, I knew that as long as love and caring were an integral part of the curriculum of the 'new' Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, the school would survive. And the students would thrive.

It's 1983, and it still works. I'm glad I had My Greatest Adventure as a First Year GB. However it worked out I Survived...and thrived.





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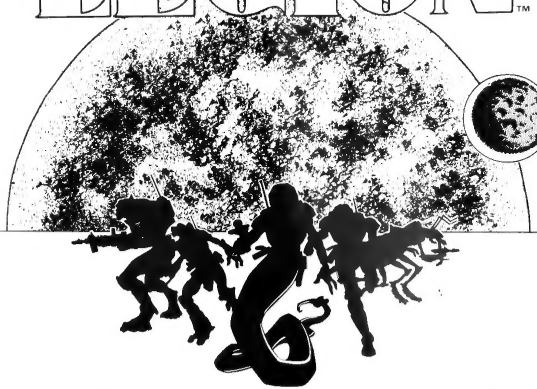

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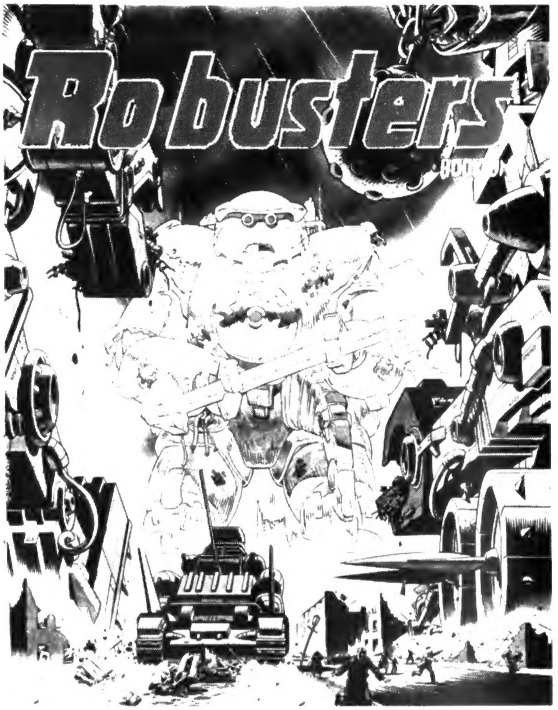

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